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HISTORY of WAR



KURSK

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PLUS:

- ✦ Battle of Jutland
- ✦ Pre-WWI arms race
- ✦ Anatomy of a warship



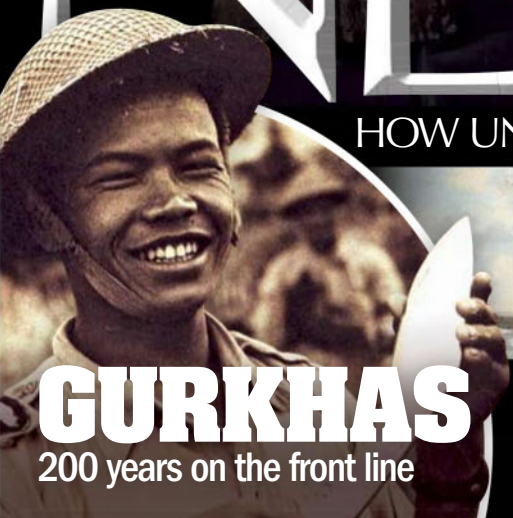
BATTLE FOR MALTA

Behind the fight for survival against the Axis onslaught

BRITAIN'S GREATEST ADMIRAL

NELSON

HOW UNSTOPPABLE TACTICS AND GENIUS COMMAND RULED THE WAVES



GURKHAS

200 years on the front line



BIRTH OF THE DREADNOUGHT

FOLLOW THE RACE TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE WEAPON AT SEA



ZEPPELIN WARS

TERROR FROM THE SKIES IN LONDON'S ORIGINAL BLITZ



SOPWITH PUP

IN THE PILOT SEAT OF THE RFC'S ICONIC FIGHTER PLANE

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JOURNEYS OF REMEMBRANCE

BESPOKE TOURS WITH THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

NORTH EAST INDIA 2016

One of the undoubted highlights of our 2014 programme was the Journey of Remembrance to India.

We are pleased to offer this Journey again in 2016, with the bonus of an excursion to Imphal. At Kohima and Imphal in the remote hillsides of North East India, the tide of the war in the East turned against the Japanese in 1944.

This unique tour offers a rare opportunity to honour those who so bravely fought and fell as we hold Services of Remembrance at both Kohima and Imphal War Cemeteries.

The tranquil and unspoilt beauty of North East India with its thick forests, lush valleys, emerald tea gardens and great rivers is in stark contrast to the cities of Kolkata (Calcutta) and Delhi, a fusion of modern skyscrapers and Victorian monuments to the Raj.



YPRES ARMISTICE DAY 2016

Ever since 1928, the 54,896 brave soldiers of the British Commonwealth who were tragically registered as 'missing in action' during WW1, have been commemorated by The Last Post being sounded under the Menin Gate.

Every single day, regardless of the weather, the Ypres buglers, who are members of the local fire brigade, perform their ode to the fallen.

No battlefield of the Great War saw more intensive fighting than the Ypres Salient in Belgium. Down the Menin Road, on Messines Ridge and at Passchendaele, nearly every regiment in the British Army passed this way. Many thousands never returned. We will also visit sites associated with the various campaigns in the Ypres area and have a chance to pay our respects by laying wreaths at some of the cemeteries, including Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and the Memorial to the Missing.

Tour price: £549.00 per person

Tour to include:

3 nights accommodation at the Mecure Lille Aeroport Hotel

Breakfast daily

Lunch and Dinner on Day 3 (or similar)

All coaching as per itinerary

Services of an RBL guide throughout



LIBOR FINES FUNDED NORMANDY TOURS

D-Day, 6 June 1944, has gone down in the annals of history as the greatest of all air and seaborne invasions. These very special Journeys of Remembrance will take you to the heart of Normandy's rich and eventful WW2 history and the beaches immortalised by the D-Day landings.

The tours follow the ever popular D-Day anniversary Journey of Remembrance and funding is available for a Normandy veteran and two carers / family members (3 travellers in total max).

An official Royal British Legion guide and a medic accompany the group.

2016 Tour dates: Please call 01473 660 800 for more information

Includes:

5 days / 4 nights bed & breakfast

Qualified medic on board

An official Royal British Legion guide



Remembrance Travel is the travel arm of The Royal British Legion and has been running tours since 1927. We now work in partnership with Arena Travel on First World War & Second World War Journeys of Remembrance and anniversary events.

Whether you are an association, a group of friends or a club, we can also create a bespoke, personalised tour, which is unique to your needs. Call 01473 660 800

Welcome

“Before this time tomorrow I shall have gained a peerage, or Westminster Abbey”

– Horatio Nelson before the Battle of the Nile

Heroes have emerged in many different forms in the history of warfare. Horatio Nelson led his men from the front, putting his body quite literally on the line for his country. His qualities as a leader and tactician, as well as his overwhelming patriotism, sealed him among Britain’s most-celebrated military heroes.

A different kind of bravery and heroism was displayed by an entire population in Malta, which withstood more than 3,300 Axis bombing raids that dropped 15,000 tons of bombs to crush the island into submission.

Though the islanders didn’t choose to be thrust into the jaws

of war, their defiant resistance on the front line, as well as that of the British forces that fought to defend them, was nothing short of heroic.



Tim
Tim Williamson
Editor



EMAIL

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CONTRIBUTORS



DAVID SMITH

In honour of the 200th anniversary of Gurkhas serving in the British Army, David has taken a look at just how these fierce fighters are selected, trained, and where they have served with distinction throughout the centuries (page 48).



JACK GRIFFITHS

Reliving his shattered naval ambitions, this issue Jack powers Full Ahead into the pre-WWI arms race and the birth of the dreadnought (page 14). He also unpacks the tactical brilliance that saw Horatio Nelson rule the waves on page 28.



TALLHA ABDULRAZAQ

Tal has taken time out of his PhD studies to cast a spotlight on the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). It was the longest war of the last century, yet remains unknown to many. To learn why it’s one of the most crucial conflicts of recent times, turn to page 72.

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Residents go about their day in a bomb-damaged street in Valletta, Malta’s capital city, on 1 May 1942

NELSON: BRITAIN'S GREATEST ADMIRAL



28 Discover the daring tactics of one of the world's most celebrated naval commanders

Frontline

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In the build up to the Great War, the German and British empires race towards naval superiority
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From bigger, more-powerful guns to sturdier plating, the new class of warship had it all
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Take a look inside the battleship that would change the face of warfare
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Two imperial superpowers slog it out in the North Sea, but who has the upper hand?
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The National Museum of the Royal Navy's Nick Hewitt explains how dreadnoughts dominated

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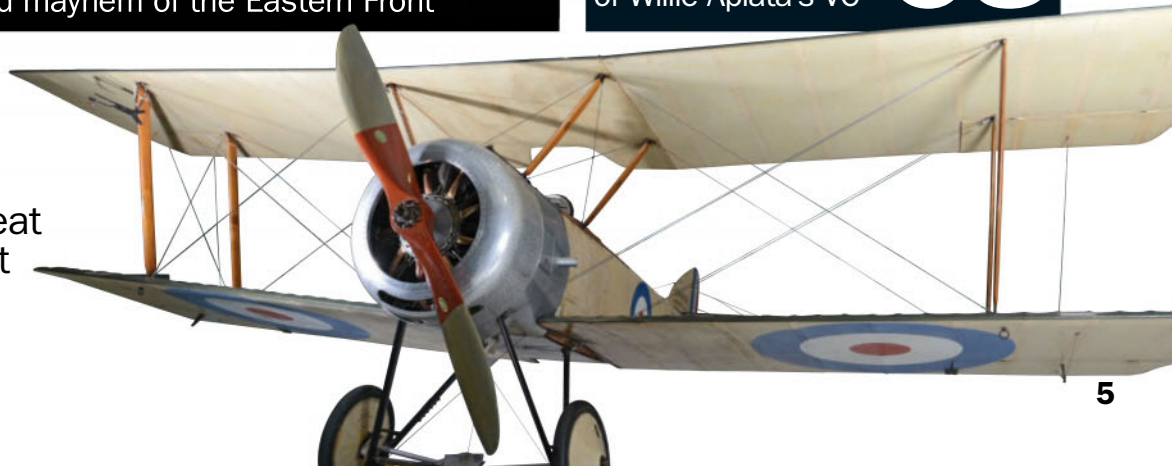


KURSK

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Follow the career of history's most feared and celebrated naval commander

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Learn just how this island put up its defiant defence against Axis forces

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David Smith explores two centuries of Gurkhas in service to the British Army

58 GREAT BATTLES Kursk

Will Lawrence takes you back to 1943 and into the biggest tank battle ever seen

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An SAS team is ambushed, and one soldier's life is about to change forever

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Learn why this conflict still reverberates around the Middle East today

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Jack Griffiths takes to the pilot seat of this iconic WWI fighter plane

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Take a closer look at this intriguing and exquisite Anglo-Saxon artefact

'Unkillable Kiwi' **68**
Read the true story of Willie Apiata's VC



WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

STARRY STARRY FIGHT

Taken 1 December 2009

A member of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force fires a .50-calibre machine gun from the top of a Jackal armoured vehicle. Preparing for deployment in Afghanistan, the brigade took part in day and night-time exercises over a four-week period. The brigade prepared on numerous gun ranges, and also took part in essential mine awareness training.



WAR
in
FOCUS**HUNT OR BE HUNTED***Taken c.1941*

A Wehrmacht Panzerjäger team holds position during the opening months of Operation Barbarossa. The invasion of the Soviet Union began in the summer of 1941 with the bombing of Soviet-controlled areas of Poland. The Eastern Front saw the largest number of casualties in WWII and spelled the end for the Third Reich.





WAR
in
FOCUS**LES DERNIÈRES CARTOUCHES***Painted 1873*

Here, Alphonse de Neuville depicts French sharpshooters attacking Bavarian troops during the Battle of Sedan (1870) in the Franco-Prussian War. The title, 'The Last Cartridges', reflects the desperate situation of the French forces encircled by the Prussian army.

After a day of fighting, Emperor Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussians.







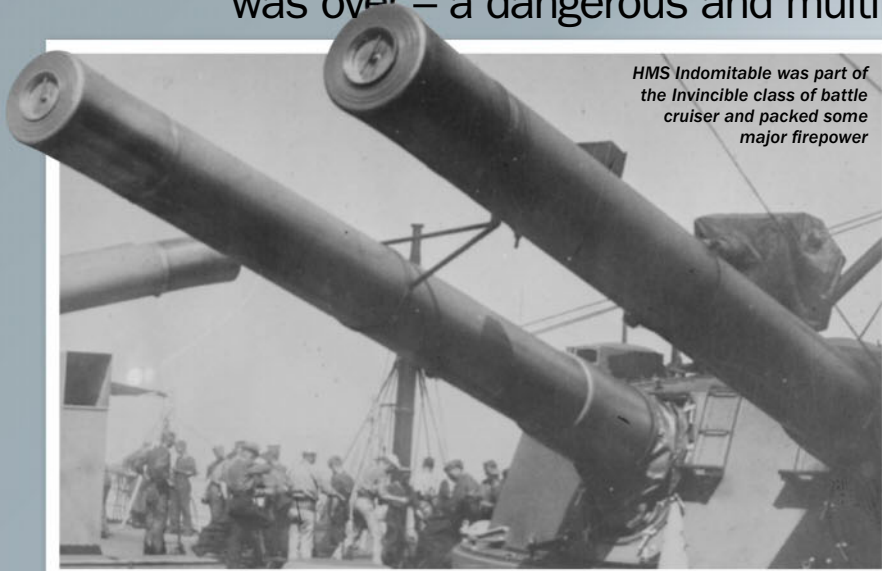
WAR
in
FOCUS
CHILD OF WAR

Taken 28 July 2003

A nine-year-old soldier fires off his AK-47 in Monrovia, Liberia, during the Second Liberian Civil War. Both the rebel groups and President Charles Taylor's government forces made prolific use of child soldiers during the conflict. After being ousted from Liberia in late 2003, Charles Taylor was convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his use of child soldiers, as well as numerous other offences.

PRE-WWI ARMS RACE

After the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902, Britain's age of Splendid Isolation was over – a dangerous and multipolar era was beginning



HMS Indomitable was part of the Invincible class of battle cruiser and packed some major firepower

After being caught out by the arrival of HMS Dreadnought, Germany responded with a fleet that had far stronger armour



THE NASSAU-CLASS BATTLESHIP

THE GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET LAUNCHES ITS FIRST DREADNOUGHTS

Commissioned: 1910

Country: German Empire

The four Nassau-class battleships were Germany's first riposte to HMS Dreadnought. They were slower, rolled in heavy seas and were equipped with smaller 11-inch guns, but the arrangement of their turrets allowed them to match Dreadnought shot for shot: eight guns for forward and aft firing, and six for a broadside.

THE INVINCIBLE-CLASS BATTLE CRUISER

AS THE ARMS RACE INTENSIFIED, THE ROYAL NAVY COMMISSIONED THE REVOLUTIONARY 'BATTLE CRUISER'

Commissioned: 1908

Country: British Empire

In 1908, Imperial Germany passed the Second Amendment to the Naval Law, a plan for an expanded High Seas Fleet. In response John 'Jackie' Fisher improved on the HMS Dreadnought and added a second revolutionary design to the Royal Navy's arsenal. Fast and lethal, the battle cruiser was as quick as an armoured cruiser, but as heavily armed as a battleship.

RICHARD BURDON HALDANE

CONCERNED AT GERMANY'S ARMED RESPONSE TO DREADNOUGHT, BRITAIN'S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR TRAVELLED TO GERMANY FOR CRISIS TALKS

Years active: 1905-12

Country: British Empire

Richard Burdon Haldane regularly met with Kaiser Wilhelm to try to agree terms. Peace talks came to a head in 1912, when Haldane travelled to Germany to quell the friction. Haldane's mission lasted four days and ended in failure when Germany announced further expansion to its navy. Luckily, Haldane was in fact fully prepared for a European war, implementing widespread reforms to the British Army throughout his tenure.

Right: After struggling to suppress Germany's imperial ambitions, Haldane ensured that the British forces were ready for action



ALFRED VON TIRPITZ

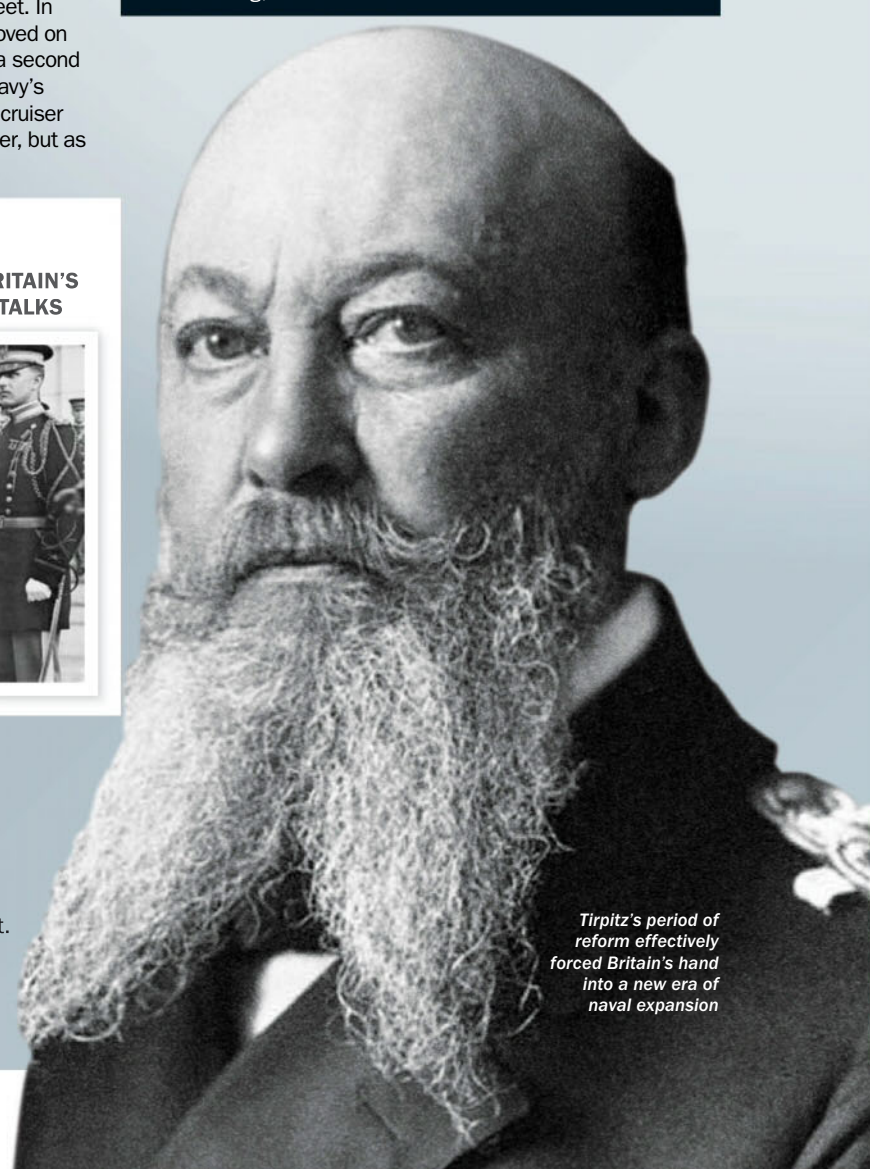
THE AGGRESSIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC SECRETARY OF STATE WHO TRANSFORMED THE GERMAN PRESENCE ON THE SEAS

Years active: 1897-1916

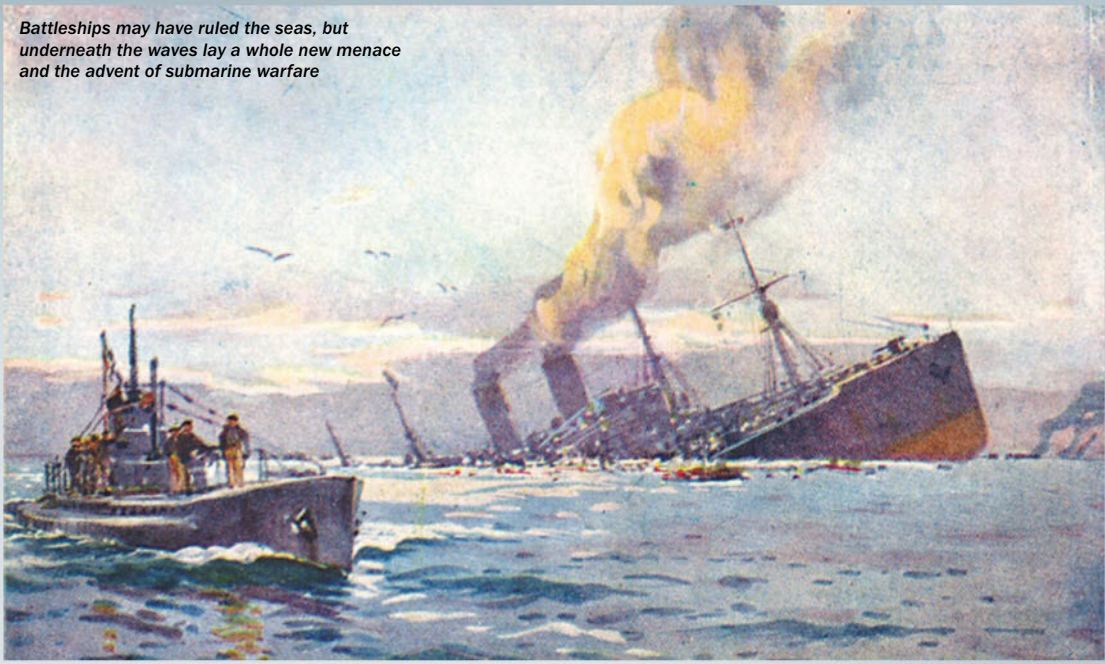
Country: German Empire

Without Tirpitz's championing of the five Naval Laws passed between 1898 and 1912, the Anglo-German naval arms race would have been very different. His enthusiasm for a drastically expanded German navy led to major reform in pursuit of Britain's dominance. Tirpitz was the mastermind of radical advancements, making clear that Britain was now the enemy.

Tirpitz's period of reform effectively forced Britain's hand into a new era of naval expansion



Battleships may have ruled the seas, but underneath the waves lay a whole new menace and the advent of submarine warfare



5 facts about THE ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL ARMS RACE

THE GREAT 'DREADNOUGHT HOAX'

In 1910, the practical joker Horace de Vere Cole tricked the Royal Navy into letting a party of 'Abyssinian royalty' inspect HMS Dreadnought. The 'royals' were five members of the Bloomsbury group in disguise.

THE RAMMING OF U-29

In Pentland Firth in March 1915, HMS Dreadnought rammed and sank the German submarine U-29. This is the only time that a battleship has been able to sink a submarine.

HMS AGINCOURT, THE HEAVIEST DREADNOUGHT OF WORLD WAR I

Carrying 14 12-inch guns in seven turrets, and weighing 30,250 tons, HMS Agincourt was the most heavily armed for its size of all the dreadnoughts in World War I.



THE BATTLE CRUISER'S FATAL FLAW?

When one of the Invincible's turrets caught fire at the Battle of Jutland, the poor design in its ammunition handling exposed cordite charges to the flames. Invincible and two other battle cruisers were destroyed in this way.

LAST OF THE DREADNOUGHTS

Launched in 1912, the USS Texas served in the Normandy Landings and at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Today, the only surviving dreadnought is a floating museum in Houston, Texas.



HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH: THE SUPER-DREADNOUGHT

THE OIL-POWERED BEHEMOTH AND THE FIRST 'FAST BATTLESHIP'

Commissioned: 1914
Country: British Empire

Like the battle cruiser, the 'fast battleship' was developed in response to the increasing power and speed of the dreadnoughts. The first of the fast battleships, the Queen Elizabeth carried eight 15-inch guns on its centreline. It had four turrets, as dispensing with the fifth created space for its new oil-powered turbines.



The BL 15-inch Mk I naval gun was specifically designed for use on HMS Queen Elizabeth

U-31 SUBMARINE

THE INVISIBLE DREADNOUGHT HUNTER BENEATH THE WAVES

Commissioned: 1914
Country: German Empire

During an annual pre-war British fleet exercise, two British submarines posing as enemy infiltrators were able to torpedo three battleships. Britain may have had the edge with its battleships and battle cruisers, but in 1914, Germany launched its first diesel-powered submarine, U-31, with a range of 12,553 kilometres (7,800 miles). They would strike fear into the hearts of Royal Navy admirals as the arms race took another turn.

"THEY WOULD STRIKE FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF ROYAL NAVY ADMIRALS AS THE ARMS RACE TOOK ANOTHER TURN"

THE KOENIG CLASS

GERMANY ADOPTS 'SUPER-FIRING' TURRETS ON THE CENTRELINE

Commissioned: 1914
Country: German Empire

The four Koenig-class battleships carried their ten 12-inch guns on the centreline, for a wider arc of fire, and their five turrets were stacked in a new 'super-

firing' arrangement. In battle, SMS Koenig displayed the new defensive capabilities of German vessels when it was struck by fire. It was able to flood some of its magazines when they caught fire, and then take on tons of water before retreating.

Below: The British and German fleets were so precious to their respective nations that the admirals were afraid for them to take any sort of damage



NAVAL TECHNOLOGY

Powered by steam turbines and packing big-gun power, HMS Dreadnought and its successors redefined the battleship for the 20th century

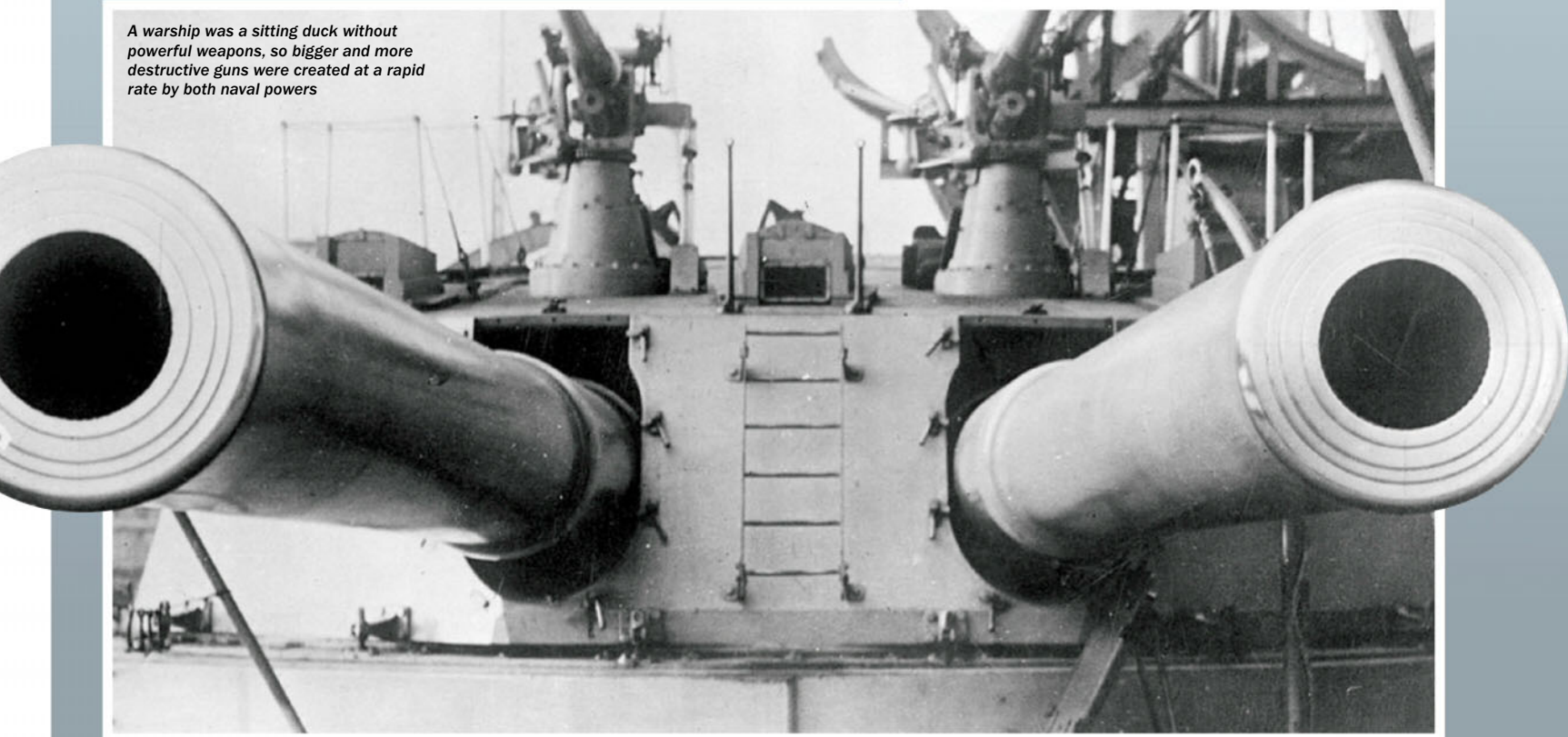


In 1904, with tension rising on the oceans, Sir John 'Jackie' Fisher, the visionary First Sea Lord of the admiralty, commissioned a new kind of battleship. Armed with long-range 12-inch guns, propelled by steam turbines and protected by armour and internal bulkheads, the dreadnoughts were a new and powerful package of metal and machinery.

BL 12-INCH MARK X GUNS ORIGIN: GREAT BRITAIN

The ten 12-inch guns of Dreadnought's main armament fired high explosive shells and had a range of 14.2 miles. They were mounted in five powered turrets: one forward, one aft, one amidships on the centreline and two in the 'wings', either side of the armoured superstructure.

A warship was a sitting duck without powerful weapons, so bigger and more destructive guns were created at a rapid rate by both naval powers



KRUPP CEMENTED STEEL ARMOUR

ORIGIN: GERMANY

Launched in 1911, Germany's Kaiser-class dreadnoughts used steel armour 'cemented' with metal alloys to minimise cracking during long engagements. Their deck armour was nearly four inches thick in the ships' crucial zones. Their waist was doubly protected: first by a 14-inch 'armoured belt' and then by an inner 'torpedo bulkhead'.

"THEIR DECK ARMOUR WAS NEARLY FOUR INCHES THICK"



The SMS Kaiser depicted on a postcard. The ship would meet its end at a mass scuttling of the German fleet in 1919

HMS Queen Elizabeth went on to serve in WWII after two rebuilds



OIL-FIRED BOILERS

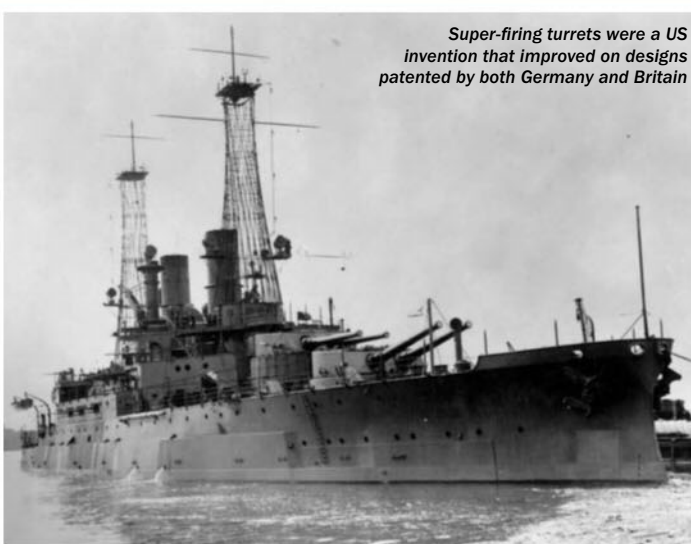
ORIGIN: GREAT BRITAIN

Dreadnought's coal-powered boilers left a thick tell-tale trail of smoke. The Queen Elizabeth-class 'super-dreadnoughts', launched in 1913, were oil powered. Oil is more energy dense than coal, requires no stokers and produces less smoke. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, guaranteed to maintain a supply of these versions of the dreadnought, which were much more efficient than previous incarnations.

SUPER-FIRING TURRETS

ORIGIN: UNITED STATES

The USS South Carolina, launched in 1910, stacked one turret above and slightly behind another. This 'super-firing' design compressed firepower into a smaller space and produced a smaller target, but designers feared that the shock waves from the fire of one turret might damage the other. The innovative design came as a surprise to Germany and Britain, who would go on to use it on the Orion and Kaiser classes respectively.

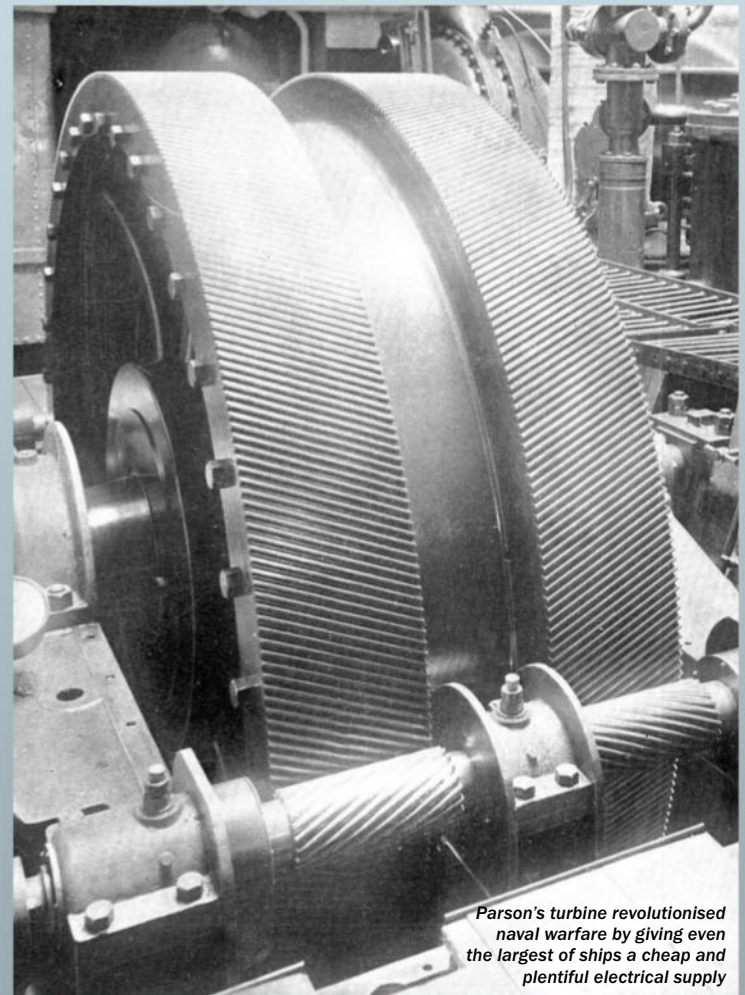


Super-firing turrets were a US invention that improved on designs patented by both Germany and Britain

PARSONS DIRECT-DRIVE STEAM TURBINES

ORIGIN: GREAT BRITAIN

Invented by Charles Parsons in 1884, steam turbines enabled high-speed, long-range cruising. Dreadnought carried two pairs of direct-drive Parsons turbines. Each was powered by 18 Babcock and Wilcox water-tube boilers, and drove two shafts with triple-blade propellers. Dreadnought's top speed was 21.6 knots (24.9 miles per hour).



Parson's turbine revolutionised naval warfare by giving even the largest of ships a cheap and plentiful electrical supply

"ARMED WITH LONG-RANGE 12-INCH GUNS, PROPELLED BY STEAM TURBINES AND PROTECTED BY ARMOUR AND INTERNAL BULKHEADS, THE DREADNOUGHTS WERE A NEW AND POWERFUL PACKAGE OF METAL AND MACHINERY"

LEADERS OF THE NAVAL ARMS RACE

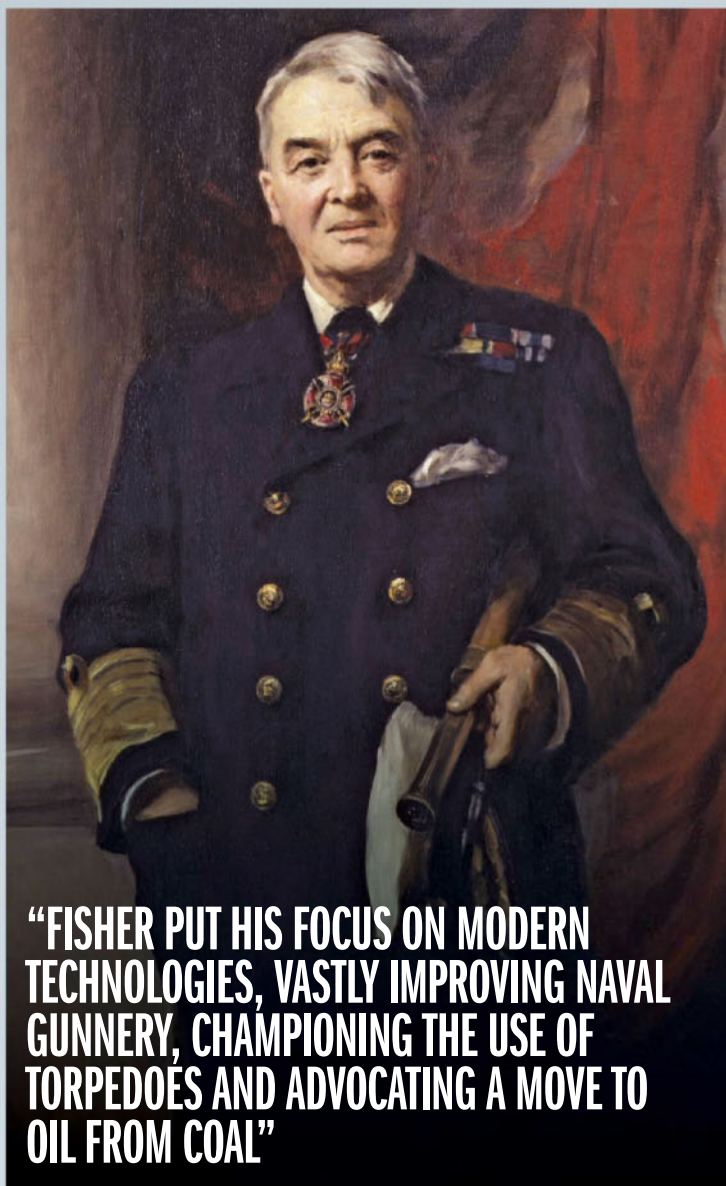
Both Germany and Britain were filled with ambitious individuals who desired to lead bigger and better militaries

LORD JOHN FISHER

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET, BRITISH ROYAL NAVY
YEARS ACTIVE: 1904-10, 1914-15

Considered the second-most-important figure in British naval history behind Lord Nelson, John 'Jackie' Fisher wasn't famed as an admiral involved in battles at sea but more as an innovator and strategist. He is celebrated as the foremost developer of a modern navy well equipped to counter the new German expansion of its fleet. As First Sea Lord he was responsible for the construction of HMS Dreadnought, the world's most feared battleship. Fisher put his focus on modern technologies, vastly improving naval gunnery, championing the use of torpedoes and advocating a move to oil from coal.

His influence on the arms race is unquestionable, but it could have been even greater if King Edward VII had agreed to his constant calls to destroy the entire German navy with a surprise, unprovoked attack similar to the Royal Navy's at Copenhagen during the Napoleonic Wars.



"FISHER PUT HIS FOCUS ON MODERN TECHNOLOGIES, VASTLY IMPROVING NAVAL GUNNERY, CHAMPIONING THE USE OF TORPEDOES AND ADVOCATING A MOVE TO OIL FROM COAL"

WILHELM II

GERMAN EMPEROR
YEARS ACTIVE: 1888-1918

If Alfred von Tirpitz was the architect of Germany's naval reform, then it was Kaiser Wilhelm II's pet project to see Germany match the British naval fleet. He was obsessed with the Royal Navy as a child, heavily influenced by his mother's roots (Queen Victoria was his grandmother) and dreamed of owning his own fleet.

After being crowned in 1888, Wilhelm set out an aggressive foreign policy aimed at protecting Germany's "place in the sun." Nowhere else was this more apparent than with the series of reforms that subsequently shook British policy. Previously an advocate of Anglo-German friendship, relations took an irreparable turn for the worse with the publication of an interview in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1908, which contained wild statements and diplomatically naive remarks by Wilhelm. The affair was a massive embarrassment and caused great humiliation domestically, from which Wilhelm never fully recovered.



THEOBALD VON BETHMANN HOLLWEG

CHANCELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE
YEARS ACTIVE: 1909-17

Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg pursued a policy of detente with the British Empire, as such admitting that Germany could not compete on the scale that the Royal Navy had grown to. Instead, Hollweg tried to get Britain on side, ending Germany's increasing isolation from fellow superpowers. He was opposed veraciously by Tirpitz, but believed that Germany could not economically compete for naval supremacy.

Russia's massive boost in troop numbers left Hollweg with no choice but to spend money on other parts of the military. He then proposed the Haldane Mission, a treaty that said Germany would recognise Britain as the winner of the arms race in exchange for British neutrality in the event of war. It was rejected by foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey, with relations between the countries already at a volatile stand-off.

ADMIRAL WILHELM SOUCHON

VICE ADMIRAL, IMPERIAL GERMAN NAVY
YEARS ACTIVE: 1881-1919

By 1914 and the outbreak of war across Europe, the Imperial German Navy was to play a huge role at sea. Fearing being trapped in the Adriatic Sea by other nations joining the war, Admiral Wilhelm Souchon attempted to manoeuvre his two ships Goeben and Breslau into the Mediterranean and cut off French ports in North Africa, denying them a route in which to transport men to fight in mainland Europe.

What happened next had a massive influence on the Ottoman Empire entering the war on the side of the Central Powers. With the British Navy in pursuit, Souchon managed to avoid capture, eventually reaching Constantinople before handing over to the Ottomans. Souchon was appointed commander-in-chief of the Ottoman Navy and subsequently ordered an attack on Russian positions weakened by the closing of the strategically important Dardanelles, destroying three key Russian ports in the Black Sea.



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Anchored off Folkestone, a sunset memorial service will give you the chance to pay your respects to the fallen who sailed from here a century before. In Boulogne, an optional excursion to the Somme will take in Albert, the main Allied town behind the front line. In addition, you'll have time to view the imposing Thiepval Memorial, which commemorates the 72,194 men with no known grave. At the Newfoundland Memorial, the wartime trenches lead you through a landscape scarred by shells.

In Dunkirk, where 338,000 troops were evacuated during Operation Dynamo, you'll have options to visit the Battle of Dunkirk Museum, the 1940 Memorial and the English cemetery La Plaine au Bois. This unique itinerary also visits Le Havre and St Peter Port in Guernsey, where there will be further wartime tours plus opportunities to enjoy the many modern-day attractions.



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- All on-board gratuities
- 24-hour room service
- All meals, snacks and entertainment on board
- Included table wine with lunch and dinner
- A full programme of live music, entertainment and talks, and much more – please call for details

Highlights...

- Visiting picturesque Boulogne-sur-Mer
- Discovering the Cathedral Notre-Dame in Le Havre
- Remembering Hitler's control over Guernsey in the Channel Islands
- Recalling the Miracle of Dunkirk.

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June 30. Dover, England. July 1. Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. July 2. Le Havre, France. July 3. St Peter Port ‡, Guernsey. July 4. Dunkirk, France. July 5. Dover, England. Cruise code: SA298

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ANATOMY OF...

HMS DREADNOUGHT

The dominant battleship of its era, this new vessel revived the naval arms race that intensified Anglo-German tensions in the lead up to World War I

HMS DREADNOUGHT

CREW MEMBERS: 773
LENGTH: 527FT (160.6M)
BEAM: 82FT (25M)
DRAUGHT: 26FT (7.9M)
DISPLACEMENT: 18,420 TONS
TOP SURFACE SPEED: 21 KTS (39 KM/H)
RANGE: 6,620 NAUTICAL MILES (12,260 KM)

MODERN OPTICAL RANGEFINDERS

HMS Dreadnought was the most accurate battleship of its time in determining distance. It was fitted with an electrical rangefinder developed exclusively by Barr and Stroud, two physics and engineering professors at the Yorkshire College (now the University of Leeds).

CONSTRUCTED IN 366 DAYS

POUNDER GUNS

Dreadnought's pounder guns acted as a form of defence against torpedo boats. Placed either at the top of the turrets or on the side of the ship, these 76mm guns had a range of 5.3 miles.

DUMARESQ MECHANICAL COMPUTER

TRANSMITTING STATION

A new Vickers Range Clock was used on board HMS Dreadnought for continuously calculating the changing range between the target vessel and an enemy ship. Corrections could be made to update the clock at any time, so the ship was always one step ahead.

STRATEGIC MAN POWER

Reversing a trend set in stone for centuries, HMS Dreadnought housed its officers and enlisted men forward, much closer to the bridge, in an effort to ensure that everybody on board was as close to their action stations as possible.

KRUPP CEMENTED ARMOUR

Krupp armour, which carbonised steel for greater hardness, was replaced at the turn of the 20th century by Krupp cemented armour and used to make Dreadnought. Its revolutionary composition promoted greater elasticity, reducing the chances of cracking.

REDUCED WATERLINE BELT

QUICKER THAN THE REST

HMS Dreadnought was the first ship to use an experimental steam turbine engine rather than the triple-expansion engine. At the time, it was the quickest ship ever, reaching a speed of 21 knots (39 kilometres per hour) despite its extra, weighty firepower.

“HMS DREADNOUGHT WAS THE FIRST TRULY MODERN WARSHIP, COMBINING A REVOLUTIONARY ARMAMENT SUPPLY, AN ELECTRONIC RANGE FINDING WEAPONS SYSTEM AND INCREASED SPEED TECHNOLOGY”

ATTACKING FIREPOWER

Dreadnought was the world's most feared battleship because of its astonishing firepower. It was built to shine in combat situations thanks to its five 12-inch twin-gun turrets that had a range of up to 14.2 miles (25,000 yards).

SUPERIOR FIRE CONTROL

All 12-inch guns onboard had identical ballistic characteristics, which simplified the task of adjusting fire in battle. This was previously not possible because guns of a different calibre created different splashes and observers would not be able to guide effectively.

THREE CENTRAL TURRETS FOR WEIGHT STABILIZATION

TORPEDO CONTROL TOWER

SOLD FOR BREAKUP IN 1921

23,000 SHAFT HORSE POWER

FIRE DOORS

A major improvement on what came before it, HMS Dreadnought removed longitudinal passageways between compartments below deck. Taking cues from submarines, the ship's connecting doors were kept shut to prevent the spread of fire and flooding.

HMS DREADNOUGHT'S PLACE IN HISTORY

As the figurehead of the Royal Navy, HMS Dreadnought kick-started a new era of ship development. Although it wasn't the first 'big-gun' ship in production – that honour is bestowed on Imperial Japan, who unsuccessfully attempted to build the IJN Satsuma in 1904 – its design sent shock waves across the naval world. Built in direct response to German efforts to challenge British supremacy on the sea, HMS Dreadnought was the first truly modern warship, combining a revolutionary armament supply, an electronic range finding weapons system and increased speed technology. Her iconic status is secured despite never sinking another battleship.

FUEL SUPPLY

At full capacity, Dreadnought could steam for 6,620 nautical miles (12,260 kilometres) at ten knots (19 kilometres per hour). It carried 2,914 tons of coal and 1,140 tons of fuel oil that was sprayed on to increase its burn rate.

BATTLE OF JUTLAND 31 MAY 1916

After years of building up battleships to dominate the oceans, the British and German navies finally came to blows in the North Sea

In early 1916, the North Sea was far from the battleground it would become, as the Royal Navy continued its blockade of the Imperial German Navy. Admiral Reinhardt von Scheer's appointment that year changed things as he ordered his ships to break out against the British barricade. Across the water, the British had grown tired of months spent skirmishing with German vessels, and were already mobilising in response. The Royal Navy's Grand Fleet would finally face off against the German High Seas Fleet, as the results of the long arms race finally came to fruition.

"THE BRITISH HAD GROWN TIRED OF MONTHS SPENT SKIRMISHING WITH GERMAN VESSELS, AND WERE ALREADY MOBILISING IN RESPONSE"

THE NAVIES OF JUTLAND

THE STRENGTH OF THE TWO NAVIES AT WWI'S DEFINING SEA CONFLICT

	BRITISH GRAND FLEET	GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET
DREADNOUGHTS	28	16
PRE-DREADNOUGHTS	0	6
BATTLE CRUISERS	9	5
LIGHT CRUISERS	26	11
DESTROYERS	77	61
ARMOURD CRUISERS	8	0
SEAPLANE CARRIERS	1	0
MINELAYERS	1	0



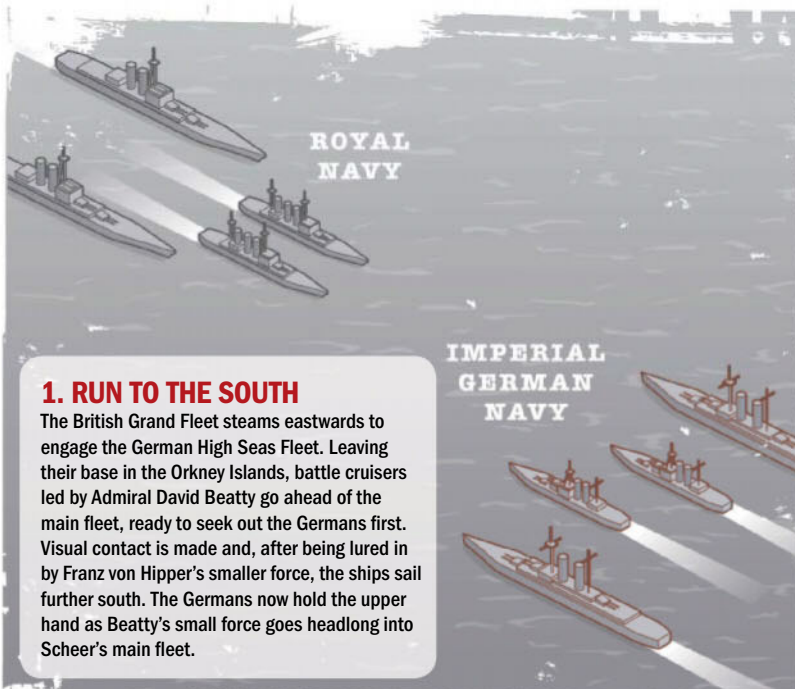
While no dreadnoughts were lost, three British battle cruisers and eight destroyers were sunk by the Germans at Jutland

JUTLAND: THE AFTERMATH

HOW THE END OF THE ARMS RACE PRODUCED BITTERSWEET VICTORY

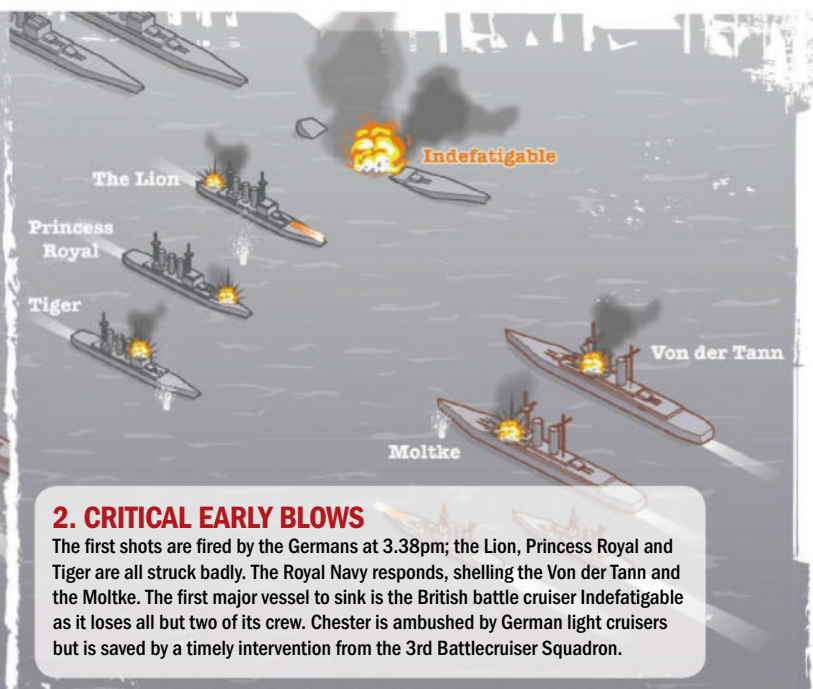
For two very proud nations, the loss of ships was hard to take. Although no dreadnoughts were sunk, many destroyers and battle cruisers were lost by both navies, with Britain recording more casualties. Despite losing more vessels and manpower, the German retreat meant the Royal Navy now had undisputed control of the North Sea, but the lack of a stunning victory was not lost on the British public, who were expecting a success of Trafalgar proportions. The inconclusive result of the battle was disappointing to the military hierarchy as well, as it was hoped that these metal leviathans could turn the tide of the war.

Admiral Jellicoe was criticised by Churchill for not taking a riskier approach and it is true that if he hadn't feared a torpedo attack to such an extent, he could have knocked the German Navy out of the war at Jutland. However, this takes away from the key manoeuvres and tactics that Jellicoe exercised prior to this moment. So soon after one of the largest arms races of all time, the role of battleships had changed and the age of the submarines and aircraft carriers was about to begin.



1. RUN TO THE SOUTH

The British Grand Fleet steams eastwards to engage the German High Seas Fleet. Leaving their base in the Orkney Islands, battle cruisers led by Admiral David Beatty go ahead of the main fleet, ready to seek out the Germans first. Visual contact is made and, after being lured in by Franz von Hipper's smaller force, the ships sail further south. The Germans now hold the upper hand as Beatty's small force goes headlong into Scheer's main fleet.



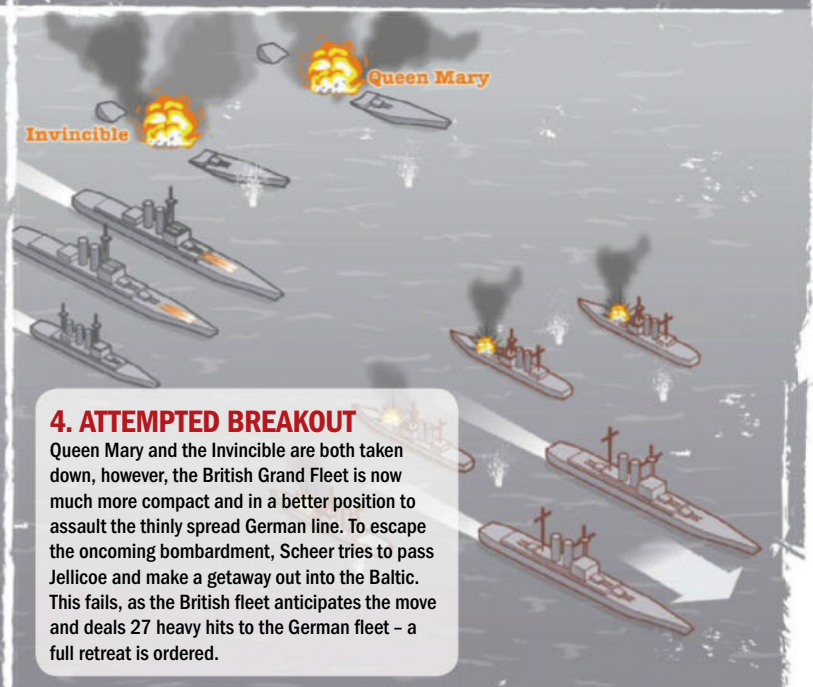
2. CRITICAL EARLY BLOWS

The first shots are fired by the Germans at 3.38pm; the Lion, Princess Royal and Tiger are all struck badly. The Royal Navy responds, shelling the Von der Tann and the Moltke. The first major vessel to sink is the British battle cruiser Indefatigable as it loses all but two of its crew. Chester is ambushed by German light cruisers but is saved by a timely intervention from the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron.



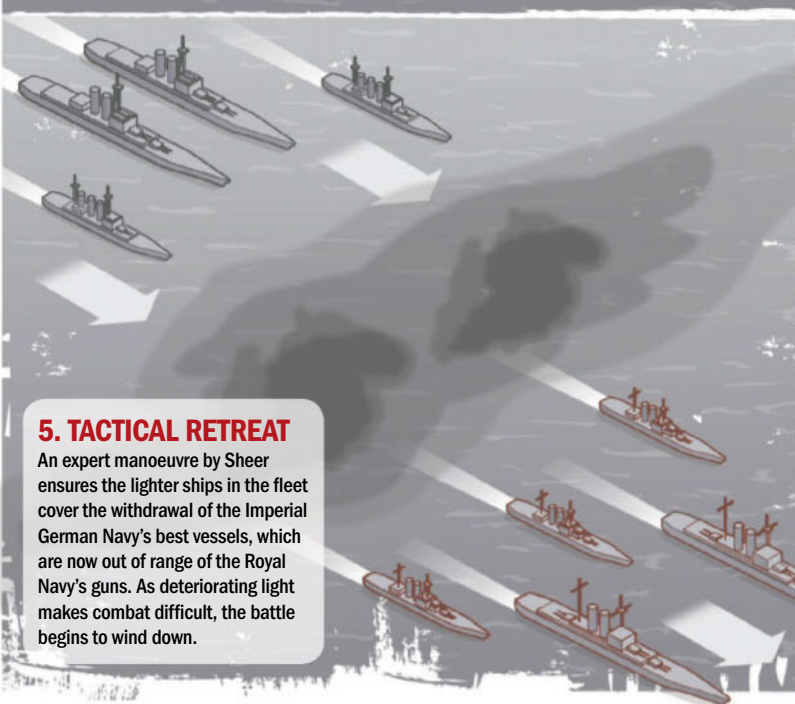
3. RUN TO THE NORTH

Beatty turns back to join up with the main British force that looms into view through the haze. Hipper orders his fleet to sail north as Admiral John Jellicoe's main battle fleet enters the fray. Jellicoe heads south, cutting the Germans off before they are aware of the British trap. As the fleets clash, the Lutzow is sunk and the Seydlitz and Derfflinger are badly damaged as the loss of the Indefatigable is avenged.



4. ATTEMPTED BREAKOUT

Queen Mary and the Invincible are both taken down, however, the British Grand Fleet is now much more compact and in a better position to assault the thinly spread German line. To escape the oncoming bombardment, Scheer tries to pass Jellicoe and make a getaway out into the Baltic. This fails, as the British fleet anticipates the move and deals 27 heavy hits to the German fleet - a full retreat is ordered.



5. TACTICAL RETREAT

An expert manoeuvre by Sheer ensures the lighter ships in the fleet cover the withdrawal of the Imperial German Navy's best vessels, which are now out of range of the Royal Navy's guns. As deteriorating light makes combat difficult, the battle begins to wind down.



6. AN UNSATISFACTORY END

Sheer turns back to face the British once again, but the threat of a submarine attack dissuades Jellicoe from finishing the Germans off. Through the night there are small skirmishes between light cruisers and destroyers. Jutland ends inconclusively as both navies return to their home ports of Wilhelmshaven and Scapa Flow.

HEAD TO HEAD

 ROYAL NAVY vs IMPERIAL GERMAN NAVY 

The two greatest naval powers of the era were both determined to come out on top in the battle on the high seas

THE ROYAL NAVY

SHIPS

Germany may have been the plucky underdog, but the British Grand Fleet always had its nose ahead throughout the arms race, both in quality and quantity.

LEADERS

Richard Burdon Haldane was one of the major players in the British war effort but failed to improve relations with the Germans, regularly losing out to Tirpitz in deals and pacts.

MANPOWER

Some accounts suggest that British sailors had the initiative trained out of them, but years of Britannia ruling the waves resulted in legions of experienced sailors.

PORTS

A rich naval heritage meant that Britain had numerous ports at its disposal, from Liverpool and Portsmouth in England to Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands.

ALLIES

The French and the Russian navies were vital in the war effort in the Mediterranean and the Baltic respectively. The US entered too late to have any decisive naval contributions.

TOTAL



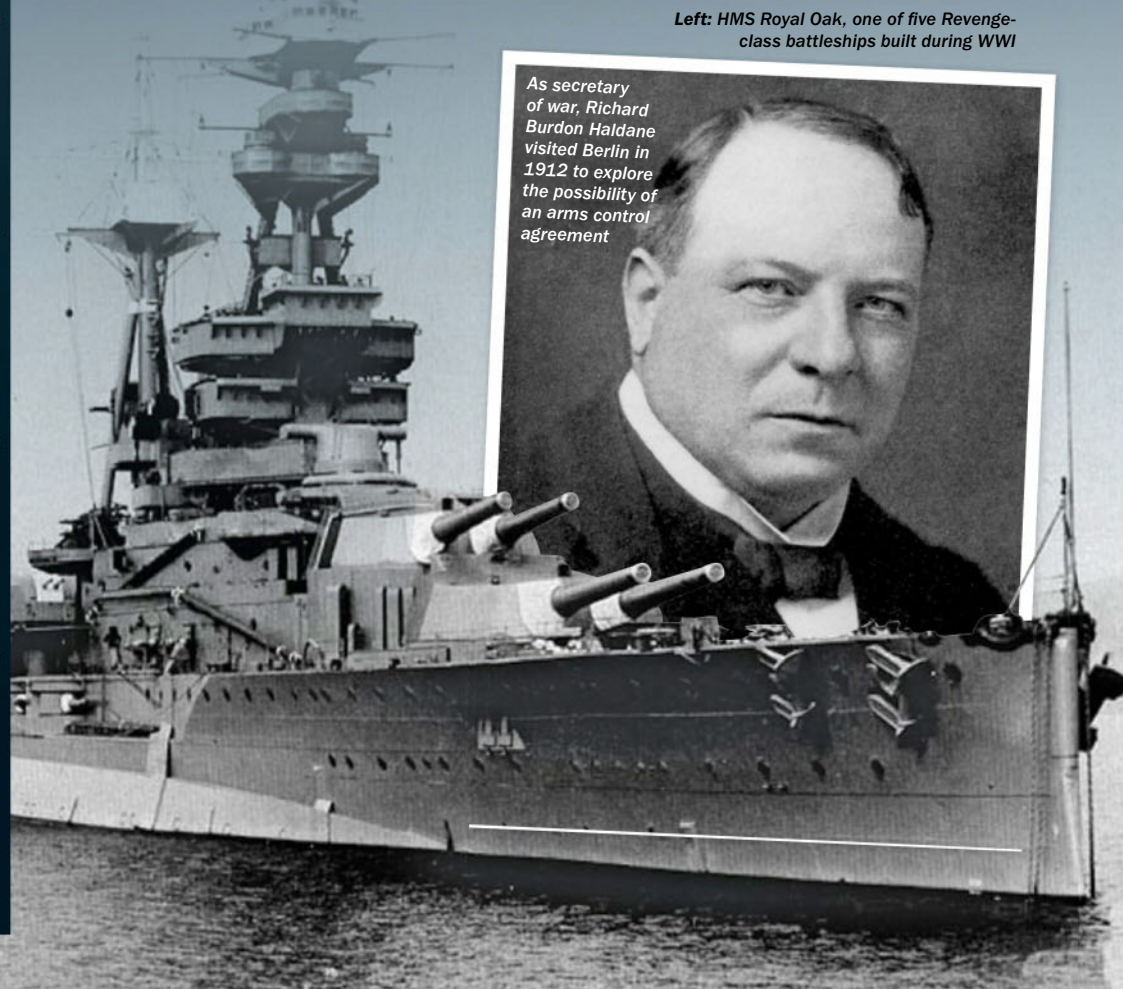
THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR PAX BRITANNICA

By the tail-end of the 19th century, Britain was the most technologically advanced nation on Earth. However, the empire was becoming more and more of a financial and military burden, with British forces thinly spread over its borders. What Britain still had was a strong navy. Wary of unified Germany's new-found industrial might, naval funding was increased and the drive to stay on top was at hand. With huge backing from the British public, the harbour furnaces were lit and the road to a new naval supremacy began.



Battleships line up for the 1909 King's Review of the Home Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet at Spithead

Left: HMS Royal Oak, one of five Revenge-class battleships built during WWI



As secretary of war, Richard Burdon Haldane visited Berlin in 1912 to explore the possibility of an arms control agreement

THE IMPERIAL GERMAN NAVY

This 1913 oil painting depicted Kaiser Wilhelm as Grand Admiral



FROM REALPOLITIK TO WELTPOLITIK

Paranoid by a fear of encirclement and driven by a desire to compete with the world's elite nations, Germany was hungry for more military power. The era of Bismarck was over and Kaiser Wilhelm began to pioneer the idea of Weltpolitik, believing that an all-powerful High Seas Fleet would be the best way to realise his grand imperial ambitions. Germany was a young nation, barely 50 years old, and these assertive aspirations would send shock waves through Britain, Russia and France, who were compelled to respond.

SHIPS

Despite Germany's best efforts, Britain's geographical location meant that it could always delegate more of its resources to naval production, which was imperative to its survival as a military power.

PORTS

Although Germany had large harbours, the likes of Kiel, Hamburg and Wilhelmshaven could not compete with the sheer number of ports that Britain had access to.

LEADERS

In the Anglo-German rivalry, Germany held all the cards and the likes of Tirpitz and Bülow continuously prevented British efforts to reduce the size of the German fleet.

ALLIES

Germany's allies were Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. In terms of naval power, both these states were flawed – Austria-Hungary was landlocked and the Ottoman Empire's former strength was already waning.

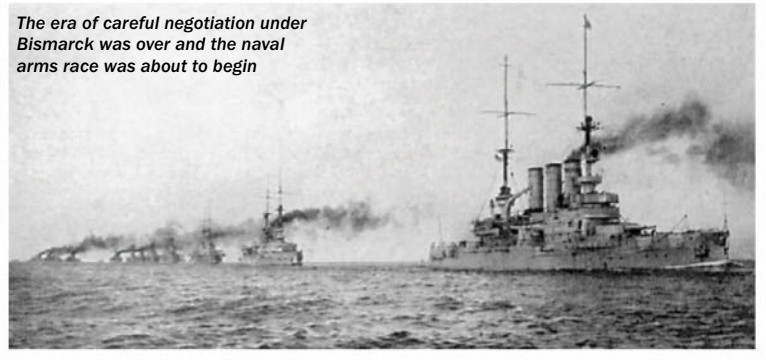
MANPOWER

Training was better on ships in the Imperial German Navy and the force only had to focus on the Atlantic.

TOTAL



The era of careful negotiation under Bismarck was over and the naval arms race was about to begin



Left: Bernhard von Bülow was Chancellor of Germany from 1900 to 1909
Below: SMS Kronprinz was one of four König-class battleships

“Driven by a desire to compete with the world's elite nations, Germany was hungry for more military power”



Jutland was critical to the continuation of British naval supremacy and was perhaps more crucial to the outcome of the war than many give it credit for



“THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND WAS WON BY THE BRITISH LONG BEFORE THE WAR STARTED, BECAUSE THEY SIMPLY HAD MORE SHIPS”



WHEN BATTLESHIPS RULED THE WAVES

Nick Hewitt, the head of heritage development at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, explains how this class of ship came to dominate the seas

WHICH WERE THE LEADING WARSHIPS ON THE SEAS PRIOR TO THE DREADNOUGHT?

Armoured turreted battleships were still the dominant warships and the currency by which nations measured their worth, much like nuclear weapons today. These ships have now misleadingly become known as 'pre-dreadnoughts', but actually this is a little simplistic. The dreadnought was not a wholly new ship but a dramatic improvement on what went before.

WHAT WAS THE DREADNOUGHT CLASS'S DEFINING FEATURE?

Dreadnoughts had two major innovations that set them ahead of their predecessors. Turbine engines gave them much greater speed, and they had a uniform main armament battery of 12-inch guns rather than a bewildering mix of weaponry. This meant that they were faster and better armed than any other battleship afloat.

WHEN DID THE NAVAL ARMS RACE BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN EMPIRES BEGIN? WHO TRIGGERED IT?

It began with the First German Naval Law in 1898. The reasons are very complex, but essentially Kaiser Wilhelm II and Admiral Tirpitz believed that Germany should have a fleet in order to cement its reputation as a world power.

The Germans grossly underestimated the British response to any challenge to its maritime prowess, as it was what the country depended on for its very existence. In a nutshell, Britain needed supremacy on the seas, as without its global trading empire, it was nothing. German power came from its army and the nation merely wanted sea power.

Dreadnoughts essentially pressed the reset button; both countries had to start building these ships from a standing start, and

ultimately the British were able to build a larger number of ships much more quickly. The Battle of Jutland was won by the British long before the conflict started, because they simply had more ships.

TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE OTHER MAJOR POWERS GET INVOLVED?

Most were building battleships and started building dreadnoughts. In fact, the Japanese and Americans laid down very similar ships at the same time but they did not build fleets of similar sizes. Battleships and later dreadnoughts were also built for various South American countries, where a miniature arms race took place.

WHICH WERE THE BEST DESIGNS OF THE ERA?

In my opinion, the Royal Navy's Queen Elizabeth-class super-dreadnoughts were the finest examples of their type, and all five ships went on to serve with distinction right through World War II as well.

HOW DID THE COUNTRIES FINANCE THIS MASSIVE ARMS RACE?

The building was financed through taxation. Britain was the world's only superpower at the time and could comfortably afford it. Readers will probably be surprised by the enormous popular support this massive increase in defence spending generated, as exemplified by the popular slogan 'we want eight and we won't wait', calling for the construction of more dreadnoughts.

HOW DID THE NEW TECHNOLOGY FARE IN THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND AND THE WAR AS A WHOLE?

Dreadnoughts performed well at Jutland and elsewhere; in fact, only one British dreadnought battleship was lost in action during World War I, HMS Audacious, which was mined. Jackie Fisher's other iconic design, the fast, well-armed but

thinly armoured battle cruisers, fared less well – three of them blowing up and sinking at Jutland with catastrophic loss of life.

HOW DID THE ROYAL NAVY ENFORCE ITS BLOCKADE ON GERMANY DURING WORLD WAR I?

Because of new weapons – notably torpedo boats, submarines and mines – the Royal Navy could no longer enforce a close blockade outside enemy ports, as they had against the French in the Napoleonic period.

Instead, they maintained a 'distant blockade' from Scapa Flow in the Orkneys, which gave the Germans access to the North Sea but still prevented them from trading. The German fleet was essentially under house arrest.

IF THE GERMANS HAD WON THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND OUTRIGHT, HOW COULD THIS HAVE CHANGED THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR?

I believe Jutland was unwinnable for the Germans, but if they had won it, they could have broken the British blockade and certainly prolonged (or maybe even have won) the war.

Jutland was the forgotten battle that shaped the course of World War I.

HOW LONG WERE SUPER-DREADNOUGHTS IN PRODUCTION UNTIL THEIR DESIGN WAS SURPASSED?

Super-dreadnoughts were gradually superseded by more modern battleship designs in the 1930s and 1940s, up to the end of World War II. However, the last World War I-era super-dreadnoughts continued to serve in the British, American, French, Italian and Japanese navies until the end of World War II.

WAS THERE ANY SORT OF ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL ARMS RACE IN THE LEAD UP TO WORLD WAR II?

Although the Nazis began to build new warships and the British responded to that, it was not really an arms race, as the Germans could never catch up.

The Third Reich never took naval re-armament as seriously as they did the redevelopment of the army. Germany began World War II with a far smaller fleet, although unit for unit, some of their ships were more modern and effective.



HMS Dreadnought had five pairs of 12-inch Mark X guns

BRITAIN'S GREATEST ADMIRAL

NELSON

WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS

The story of the Royal Navy's greatest admiral from his early beginnings to the glory of Trafalgar

Horatio Nelson's journey from obscurity to national hero is a remarkable story. Filled with epic sea battles, harbour assaults and land skirmishes against a plethora of rival world powers, Nelson gave his life serving king and country.

His naval career began like the majority of new recruits as he trained hard on the Thames Estuary. However, unlike many other navy newcomers, the 12-year-old Nelson had a trump card – his uncle was no other than Maurice Suckling, an experienced captain in the Royal Navy. With this added direction, Nelson's skills were brought to the fore and the path was set for this talented maverick, who would go on to become one of the best commanders to ever serve the Royal Navy.

From the resounding success of the Nile to the ingenuity of Copenhagen, this is the story of the flawed genius and all-round maverick who helped Britain rule the waves in an era of an emerging America in the New World and almost constant threats from mainland Europe in the shape of France and Spain.

Polar bears, malaria and yellow fever

Fast tracked through the ranks due to his uncle's position, along with a fair amount of natural talent, Nelson was soon operating outside the safety of British waters. His first trip was a regulation one-year journey to the Caribbean aboard a merchant ship, but things would soon get much tougher for the young midshipman. One particularly arduous journey came in the form of the 1773 expedition on board HMS Carcass,

a bomb vessel sent to the Arctic Circle in the hope of finding a north-west passage to the Pacific. After passing Spitsbergen, the ship's course was barred by ice. While stuck, Nelson ventured off the ship, where he was attacked by a polar bear. After his musket failed to fire, he was forced to use the weapon to club the bear. Some sources say that fire from the ship's guns gave him a helping hand to scare it away, saving Nelson's life.

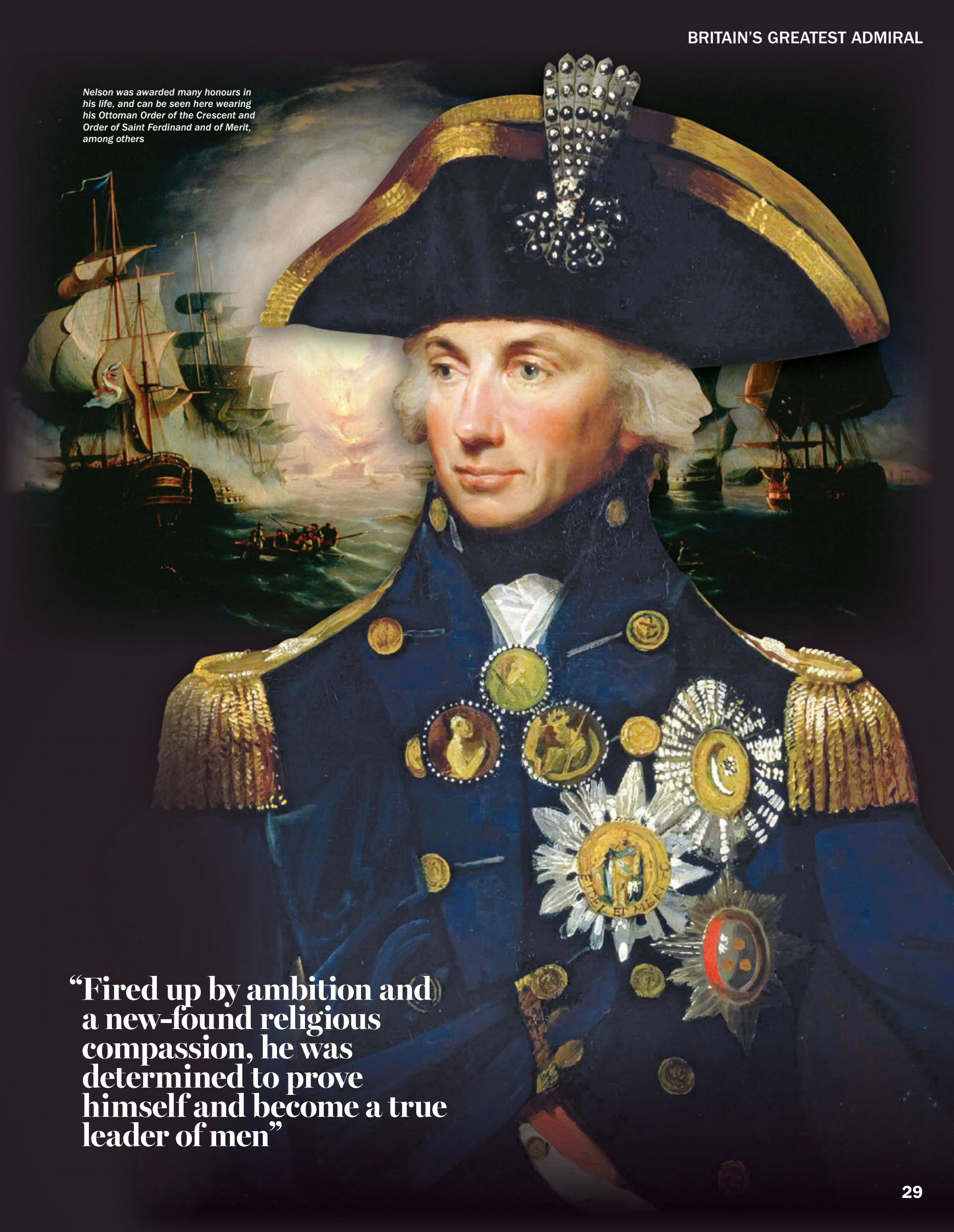
Perhaps even worse for the inexperienced sailor was a voyage to India three years later, in 1776. Nelson, who had always been a sickly child, suffered with a near-fatal bout of malaria and was quarantined. After time spent in isolation, he eventually recovered, but had recurrent partial paralysis for the rest of his life. During the illness, Nelson began to get delirious. On the voyage back to Britain aboard HMS Dolphin, he had a vision of a glowing orb and a premonition that one day he would become a hero. The young sailor had become depressed during the trauma of his malarial fever, and his recovery from the hallucinations signalled a turning point in his life. Fired up by ambition and a new-found religious compassion, he was determined to prove himself and become a true leader of men.

The following year, Nelson passed the examination for lieutenant, and by 1779 he was a captain. His first assignments were in the Baltic and Canada, as well as the West Indies, where Britain was beginning to lose its grip on its commercial interests in the New World. The American Revolutionary War was at its height and the British Empire was struggling against the Patriots. Nelson, now the captain of a frigate ship and serving under Admiral Robert Digby and Lord Samuel Hood, was delegated to operations against the Spanish settlements in Nicaragua. He participated in the disastrous attack on San Juan in 1780, where the British force was riddled with yellow fever; Nelson himself was lucky to survive.

After the war, Britain still held on to its colonies in the West Indies, and in 1784, after briefly returning home, Nelson was entrusted with enforcing new navigation acts in the area. Trade had been prohibited between the new

Nelson was also known as Horace after his uncle and was schooled in both Norwich and North Walsham

Nelson was awarded many honours in his life, and can be seen here wearing his Ottoman Order of the Crescent and Order of Saint Ferdinand and of Merit, among others



“Fired up by ambition and a new-found religious compassion, he was determined to prove himself and become a true leader of men”

American states and the remaining British colonies, and Nelson would be the man to police these new regulations.

He oversaw the development of British harbour facilities on the islands including his very own Nelson's Dockyard in Antigua. In his efforts to protect these new assets, though, Nelson often went one step too far in applying the commercial shipping laws. After seizing four American ships, both his commander-in-chief and the governor of the Leeward Islands came into conflict with him over his law enforcement. They were so angered at Nelson's methods that there were attempts to have him court martialled, or even removed from the Royal Navy completely.

Luckily for Nelson, the Admiralty and King George III voted against any action being taken on the captain, who was already showing his true colours as a determined and somewhat rebellious character. However, he was not let off entirely, and was refused another command.

Operations in the Mediterranean

After that misdemeanour, a year later Nelson visited the island of Nevis and met Frances Nisbet. He was at a low ebb after his issues with the Admiralty, and Frances helped him through what was a strenuous and lonely time for him. The couple later married in March 1787 and Nelson became the stepfather of her seven-year-old son, Josiah.

With the Royal Navy still reeling from the combined US, French and Spanish attacks, the young captain was back home in Burnham Thorpe, out of work and barely surviving on peacetime half pay. This lasted five long years,



The Danes fought hard at the Battle of Copenhagen but were eventually worn down by Nelson, who had directly disobeyed orders, by continuing the attack

and Nelson became bitter at an Admiralty he was convinced had a vendetta against him.

In January 1793, all this changed with the execution of the French King Louis XVI. Revolution was escalating and the British monarchy was determined to stop it spreading out of mainland Europe. Leaving Frances behind, and taking the 13-year-old Josiah with him, Nelson answered the call of duty and was given command of the 64-gun third-rate ship of the line HMS Agamemnon. This was a step up from anything Nelson had experienced before. The

ship was fast and manoeuvrable, and manned by a well-trained crew.

Supporting British interests in the Mediterranean, the ship was assigned to Toulon in southern France, which was under attack by French revolutionaries. Among the forces laying siege to the port was a 24-year-old officer of artillery by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte. The momentum of the battle was with the French and Nelson was sent to Naples to gather reinforcements. This was all in vain, however, as the revolutionary forces soon conquered the city.

NELSON'S EARLY LIFE

THE CHILDHOOD OF THE MAN WHO WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST ADMIRALS THE ROYAL NAVY HAD EVER SEEN

Horatio Nelson was born into an academic family and was the sixth of 11 children. A sickly child, his father Edmund was a clergyman in Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, while his mother, Catherine, had relations in high places. Her great uncle was Robert Walpole, the former Whig prime minister of Britain, but even more important to the young Horatio was her brother, Captain Maurice Suckling, the future controller of the British Navy. When Catherine died, it was time for Horatio to go to sea and it was his uncle Maurice that would show him the ropes.

The young Nelson was thrust straight into navy life, joining up at Chatham at the tender age of 12. The first ship Nelson stepped aboard was HMS Raisonnable, and it is believed that on his first day, he paced around the ship being ignored by everyone. It was not until the next day when his uncle arrived that he got his first role as an apprentice midshipman. Despite suffering from seasickness, his talent and commitment soon shone through. Horatio Nelson's career in the Royal Navy had begun.



A young Horatio was attacked by a polar bear when he was a midshipman on a voyage to the arctic in 1773

THE YOUNG COMMANDER

ABOARD HMS AGAMEMNON, NELSON'S FAVOURITE SHIP

A 64-gun behemoth of the 1777 Ardent class, when Nelson first stepped aboard Agamemnon in 1793 it was far and above anything he had commanded before. He was the vessel's captain for three years of its 28-year-long career in the Royal Navy.

Serving on the war torn seas of the Napoleonic era, Agamemnon fought in the major battles at Copenhagen and Trafalgar. Although he was only on it for a short time, Nelson remained fond of the ship and it served in the Royal Navy until 1809, when it was wrecked off the coast of Uruguay.

Agamemnon (far left) was first commanded by Nelson in 1793

Afterwards, Royal Navy commander Lord Hood relocated to Corsica, where Nelson and his crew were tasked with capturing the communes of Bastia and Calvi. It was here that Nelson would receive the first of his many war wounds. While in the field, a French shot launched debris into his face, forcing him from the battle and leaving him almost blind in his right eye. After being patched up, Nelson, who fancied himself as a bit of a spin doctor, was the first to approach the newspapers with his account of the battle. He always made sure his version was the one printed, a trait that would stay with him throughout his naval career.

The spin wasn't always needed though: Nelson was forging a reputation as a daring and bold leader who was willing to disobey orders when he believed his views were better suited to the task in hand. Discipline in the Royal Navy was very strict, with captains and commanders often ruling with an iron fist and by striking fear into their subordinates. Nelson was different. He went against the standard authoritarian manner employed by his contemporaries. Instead, he had an empathy and even a love for his men, which led him to be universally admired. His confidence rubbed off on the men he commanded and the

admiration was of benefit to Nelson as well, who, plagued by insecurity and vanity, relished the flattery and praise he received.

A rebellious streak

The long-serving Hood was replaced by Admiral William Hotham at the tail end of 1794. Hotham's position at the helm was short lived, however, as the veteran 60-year-old seaman Sir John Jervis came into the fold. Nelson instantly had a good rapport with Jervis, who recognised the young man's qualities as a leader. The new appointment coincided with French expansion in the Mediterranean as the British were forced to retreat back to the safety of Gibraltar. Jervis's respect for and trust in Nelson would soon be tested, as the British fleet was ambushed by Spanish ships on their way out of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar. The Battle of Cape St Vincent was about to begin.

Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, a decisive defeat was inflicted on the Armada Española, with Nelson the architect of the victory. On 14 February, Jervis had sailed the British through the core of the Spanish fleet after being waylaid by foggy weather. The admiral's hastily arranged plan was to

cut between the two Spanish divisions and eliminate one after the other. However, the ships of the line were travelling at such a speed that it was evident they would not be able to turn quickly enough to undertake this manoeuvre. Nelson, who had been transferred from Agamemnon to HMS Captain, was the only one to predict the impending failure, so defied orders by turning out of line to attack the front of the second Spanish division.

As Jervis slowly came to help, Captain held off seven Spanish Man-of-War, utilising both efficient gunnery and daring boarding raids. Nelson's bold tactics were critical and earned him a knighthood as well as a promotion to rear admiral. His achievements, although undoubtedly great, were embellished by Nelson, who once again played the press to his advantage. Writing his own account of the battle, he passed his description of events on to his friend Captain William Locker, who ensured this would be the story put to press.

After the battle, the British fleet sailed to Lisbon for a refit and to clear the ships of their battle scars. Later that year, mutinies became a real issue for the Royal Navy, like the insurrections at Spithead, the Nore and Cadiz in 1797. Dissenters were dealt with severely, with court martials and even death sentences for many of those that disobeyed. The date of execution for the dissenters at Cadiz fell on a Sunday. Some senior officers were opposed to execution on a holy day, but Admiral Jervis overruled them and the sentence went ahead.

“Nelson's bold tactics were critical and earned him a knighthood as well as a promotion to rear admiral”

THE ROYAL NAVY AT THE TIME OF NELSON

ANDREW LAMBERT EXPLAINS HOW AN INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION FUNCTIONED ON A DAILY BASIS

Nelson's Royal Navy was an enormous organisation by contemporary standards with up to 120,000 men afloat and almost as many working ashore in support roles. There were more than 200 battleships, 500 cruisers and smaller ships, three major fleet bases and a host of smaller support facilities spread across the world, from Portsmouth to Penang. The Royal Navy accounted for close on 50 per cent of government expenditure. Despite the resources, and an almost unbroken success, defeating all significant rivals and conducting operations on a truly global scale, life in Nelson's navy was hard. Long periods spent at sea meant a monotonous diet of salted meat, dried peas and hard biscuits, washed down with watered rum. Discipline was physical – flogging, and hanging – while the occupational hazards included drowning, disease, falls from the rigging and battle injuries. Great admirals knew that they depended on their men, and did everything they could to improve conditions. Nelson was obsessive about obtaining fresh food and lemon juice, to counter debilitating and deadly scurvy.

Nelson's tactics at the Battle of Cape St Vincent helped secure the British victory



“Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, a decisive defeat was inflicted on the Armada Española, with Nelson the architect of the victory”



“Had it been Christmas Day instead of Sunday, I would have executed them. We know not what might have been hatched by a Sunday’s grog; now your discipline is safe”

Nelson congratulated Jervis on his decisive response to the mutiny and is said to have remarked: “Had it been Christmas Day instead of Sunday, I would have executed them. We know not what might have been hatched by a Sunday’s grog; now your discipline is safe.” When not dealing with mutinies, Nelson was hard at work commanding the navy’s inshore blockading squadron at Cadiz, south of the Portuguese capital. The attack on Cadiz was hard fought as the British laid siege to the important harbour for weeks. The Spanish were resolute in their defence and at one point Nelson’s ship was boarded. The British crew fended off the invaders and Nelson was saved by his coxswain, John Sykes, who parried a cutlass that was about to strike him.

Eventually, the attack on the strategically important Cadiz had to be called off, as it was obvious that it was getting nowhere. It was a humiliating failure for the Royal Navy, but the blockade of the port was still in place, so there were some crumbs of comfort for the British.

Public admiration and rising stock

There would be no rest for Nelson as another face-off against the Spanish wasn’t far away. The Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife looked good for the British on paper, but would become the worst possible start for the new rear admiral and perhaps the worst defeat of his career. The objective was to capture Spanish treasure ships anchored in Tenerife, and a surprise attack of seven ships on the settlement of Santa Cruz was planned for 21 July 1797. This was foiled, but Nelson soldiered on, changing his focus of attack to the harbour. Under heavy fire from the Spanish defences, the men that landed on the island were pinned down and not making any progress. The attack was a disaster and Nelson himself suffered

another war wound, as a stray grapeshot shattered his right elbow. After his arm was strapped up by Josiah, it was amputated by the ship’s surgeon, Thomas Eshelby, and would be an everlasting reminder of his failure.

The injury kept Nelson out of action for a significant portion of time as he returned to England on the frigate HMS Seahorse to rest up. His wife nursed him back to health, but his arm was beyond repair and would now cause the rear admiral pain every day of his life. The great victory at St Vincent still lingered in the public’s mind though, and while he was back on British shores, Nelson was honoured as the hero of the battle. This public admiration didn’t go unnoticed, and he was given the Order of the Bath by King George III on 27 September 1797. By the time he had recovered, Nelson longed to be at sea once again and was thrust into action almost immediately.

The Battle of the Nile was one of Nelson’s most famous victories. In the spring of 1798, the earl of St Vincent had ordered him to closely monitor the French fleet that was making tentative yet threatening moves off the coast of Egypt. Aboard HMS Vanguard, Nelson set off in pursuit of the Marine Nationale. The two navies eventually met just east of Alexandria in August 1798. Napoleon was intent on accessing the Suez Canal and controlling the trade routes to India, but the British had other ideas. The comprehensive victory dealt to the French left their armies stranded as their campaign faltered. Nelson received a three-inch wound on his forehead above his right eye, joining a growing list of battle scars.

Despite the victory, operations in the Mediterranean were far from over, and after a successful blockade and recapture of Naples in 1799, Nelson was ordered to sail to Minorca. This was where the Admiralty felt the next

THE NELSON TOUCH

LAUGHTON PROFESSOR OF WAR STUDIES ANDREW LAMBERT TAKES US INSIDE THE MIND OF THE GENIUS OF HORATIO



“The ‘Nelson Touch’ was a mark of his genius, the ability to out-think his enemy, and simplify the tasks he set for his captains. Nelson planned his battles from the strategic level downwards; making his

tactics fit the wider context of the war.

“At Trafalgar, he had to destroy the enemy fleet in an afternoon before the weather broke and used high-risk tactics. He led the attack so that he could destroy Admiral Villeneuve’s flagship, paralysing the enemy’s command and control. His followers only had to follow his example. It was the mark of his genius that he did not follow a specific tactical system. At the Battle of the Nile in 1798, he left the initial attack to his experienced captains, and chose when to double the attack on the enemy line. The French fleet was wiped out.

“At Copenhagen in 1801, he had to persuade Denmark to change sides, without causing any lasting political damage, so he kept the entire battle under tight control and offered the Danes an armistice when they were effectively defeated, and before too many lives were lost.”

threat from Napoleon lay, but Nelson disagreed and refused to leave Naples. In the end, he was correct in his assumption, but such blatant disobedience (and his reported acceptance of the dukedom of Bronte in Sicily from King Ferdinand IV) left the Royal Navy elite with no choice but to send him home.

Assaults in the Baltic

The exile didn’t last long before Nelson was needed again. By 1801, the War of the Second Coalition was winding down as the Austrian Empire laid down its arms to French rule.

NELSON’S RIVALS

THE GREAT NAVAL COMMANDERS OF THE NAPOLEONIC ERA WHO COMPETED WITH NELSON FOR CONTROL OF THE SEAS

FRANÇOIS-PAUL BRUEYS D’AIGALLIERS



The French commander at the Battle of the Nile, d’Aigalliers had risen through the ranks to become Nelson’s equal in the

French Navy. His defensive tactics lost out to the British at the battle of the Nile and he died aboard his flagship, Orient

PETER WILLEMOES



Although only a teenager at the Battle of Copenhagen, Willemoes is remembered for his great courage during

the conflict that impressed even Nelson, who commended him to the king of Denmark, Frederick VI, after the battle.

PIERRE-CHARLES VILLENEUVE



Perhaps his most famous opponent, Villeneuve was a constant thorn in Nelson’s side. After leading him out of the

Channel and into the Atlantic, he faced off against the British at Trafalgar but lost out on that day to a superior Royal Navy.

CUTHBERT COLLINGWOOD



The forgotten man of Trafalgar, Lord Collingwood took control of the British fleet as Nelson lay dying and steered the

British forces to a crucial victory. He would continue to serve the Royal Navy as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet.



THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

NELSON PUMMELS ADMIRAL BRUEYS D'AIGALLIERS' FLEET, CRIPPLING THE FRENCH FORCES IN NORTH AFRICA

1-2 AUGUST 1798

01 French found at Alexandria
After a long search for the French fleet, it is eventually found at the port of Alexandria in Egypt. 200 transport vessels are anchored here but the main attack force is to the east in the Bay of Abukir.

02 British attack
The Royal Navy ships sail into the French line, firing at the bows and sterns. The French Navy is caught unawares by the British attack as its admiral, Brueys, was convinced that Nelson would not launch an attack as the light dwindled.

03 Land defence
On Abukir Island, French positions on the coast heavily bombard the British ships but it turns out to be relatively ineffectual. Back on the water, the British ship Orion disables the Guerrier and attacks the Guerrier and Franklin further down the French line.

04 Entrance of Vanguard
Nelson's flagship, Vanguard, enters the fray and takes the seaward line of the French Navy. The ship engages with Aquilon and Spartite and takes heavy fire, with so much damage caused that it has to be bailed out by Minotaur.

05 The Bellerophon
One ship that encapsulates the British aggression in the campaign is HMS Bellerophon. Racing into battle, it heads straight for Orient, the largest French vessel. The ship fights valiantly but is outmatched by Orient and its devastating broadsides.

06 All-out attack on Orient
As the mastless Bellerophon drifts away, ships surround Orient. Pounding it with relentless fire, the British are determined to bring down the behemoth. On Vanguard, Nelson is struck by a langridge shot and treated for his wounds.

07 The Orient explodes
The French admiral Brueys is fatally injured and dies on board Orient just before the ship's final moments. Under heavy fire from the Alexander, Swiftsure and Leander, the vessel's magazines ignite and the crew dive into the sea as it explodes.

08 The battle is won
The shock loss of Orient reverberates across the battlefield, which is now plunged into darkness. French resistance continues throughout the night until 3pm the next day. The French invasion of Egypt stalls and Nelson's reputation grows to unprecedented levels.

HMS VICTORY NELSON'S FLAGSHIP

HOW THE FAMOUS SHIP PERFORMED ITS DUTY AT THE LAST GREAT LINE-BASED CONFLICT IN HISTORY: TRAFALGAR

TARGET ACQUIRED

Victory's primary objective at Trafalgar was to eliminate the Santísima Trinidad and the Bucentaure. In doing so, it took many blows but survived due to the French habit of aiming high at masts rather than low at decks.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Victory had taken so many hits that it was completely immobilised. Nelson's flagship may have been a near wreck, but it had taken out its opposite number the Redoubtable. The Royal Navy's superior gunnery had won the day.

“VICTORY WOULD LINE UP ALONGSIDE THE OPPOSING SHIP AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THEN IT COULD UNLEASH THE FULL FURY OF ITS THREE GUN DECKS IN A BROADSIDE SALVO”

LINE WARFARE

To utilise its devastating cannons effectively, Victory would line up alongside the opposing ship as quickly as possible. Then it could unleash the full fury of its three gun decks in a broadside salvo.

VICTORY'S CREW

Up to 830 men packed themselves into Victory's three decks. The conditions were cramped and the diet poor. Nelson did everything he could to ensure scurvy didn't run riot, as he himself had lost teeth to the disease.

By the time of Trafalgar, Victory was 46 years old but could still hold its own on the Napoleonic battlefield

THE SHIP IN SAIL

Victory could achieve a top speed of 16km/h (10mph), which was quick for the era. 37 sails and 41.8km (26 miles) of rigging would help propel the vessel through the oceans.

VICTORY FACTS

- ✦ It is the only surviving ship to have fought in the Napoleonic Wars, the French Revolutionary Wars and the American Revolutionary War.
- ✦ The ship held a mighty 104 cannons in three different batteries. The biggest guns were 32 pounders.
- ✦ 6,000 elm and oak trees were cut down to construct Victory.
- ✦ The three square sails cover 5,440 square metres (17,847 square feet).
- ✦ 400,000 people a year visit the warship, which now stands in a dry dock in Portsmouth, UK.

VICTORY KEEPS FIGHTING

Despite the immense amount of casualties, the ship lost few men on the lower decks, so it could keep firing despite taking major hits. The opposite was true on many French ships, so they were immobilised quicker due to the accurate British gunnery.

TRAFALGAR CASUALTIES

As well as the mortal wounding of their charismatic admiral, 51 servicemen were killed and 91 injured. This was the highest amount of any British ship in the battle.

BOARDING VICTORY

The ship was boarded by a small crew from the French Redoubtable but easily survived the attack, with its marines cutting down the attackers.

EMMA HAMILTON

THE LADY WHO TOOK NELSON AWAY FROM HIS MARRIAGE AND BECAME THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE

In the summer of 1793, a woman would walk into Nelson's life and change it forever. Her name was Emma Hamilton and she was the wife of Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador to Naples. They first met fleetingly after Nelson had recaptured Naples but wouldn't meet again until the following year when their affair began.

Despite both being married, the couple became infatuated with each other and even had one child out of wedlock. Horatia Nelson was born in 1801 and the couple were overjoyed by her birth. They would later buy Merton Place together, a country house in Surrey. Nelson and Frances had become estranged by this time, and the two had separated. He also began seeing much less of his stepson Josiah, who was paid off by the navy in 1800 after not making the grade as an officer. Another child, Emma, was born in 1803, but died of chickenpox shortly after childbirth without ever meeting her father.

The Admiralty was never truly happy with Nelson's affair with Emma and had lost patience with his maverick ways that were gaining as much attention as his military prowess back home. The Royal Navy had the final say; when Nelson died, Emma was not allowed to attend the funeral and all of his fortune was given to his brother. As a result, Horatia struggled for money and died almost penniless in 1815.



Nelson wrote many letters to Lady Hamilton as they led a secret long-distance relationship

Russia too was abandoning the coalition and initiated the League of Armed Neutrality to protect its interests in the Baltic. The British didn't take too kindly to this, and responded in force against the Danes (who were in league with the new Russian policy) at the Battle of Copenhagen in April. It would become known as one of Nelson's hardest-fought battles. After the resounding victory on the Nile, Nelson, now a vice admiral, was again entrusted with command, operating under the watchful yet relaxed eye of admiral and commander-in-chief, Sir Hyde Parker.

The battle began the next day and was fiercely fought from the start. The ships Agamemnon, Bellona and Russell were all grounded as the British vessels did battle with both the formidable Danish Trekroner fort and the treacherous shallow water.

After three hours, the British gunnery began to slowly but surely turn the tide on the strong Danish fortifications. However, the notoriously cautious Parker was alarmed by the lack of progression and called for an immediate withdrawal. Signalling to Nelson's flagship HMS Elephant, a retreat was called. Risking his career as well as the lives of his men, Nelson acknowledged the signal but did not repeat it to the rest of the fleet. He then took his telescope to his blind eye and remarked: "I really did not see the signal."

Buoyed by his rebellious streak, the rest of the British fleet (except for HMS Amazon, whose captain Edward Riou was killed when attempting to retreat) rallied and the battle restarted. The losses were heavy, but within an hour Nelson's gamble had paid off and the Royal Navy emerged victorious. 6,000 Danes were dead, six times more than the casualties the British recorded. A 24-hour ceasefire was called and the Royal Navy was ready for more assaults on the League of Armed Neutrality. However, shortly after Copenhagen, Tsar Paul was betrayed by his military officials and assassinated, ending the threat of Russia. Snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, Nelson was showered with praise after the battle and was elevated to commander-in-chief in place of the recalled Parker and promoted to viscount. At long last, he had the position he dreamed of and had craved so much.

Nelson's first move as viscount was an attack on the French positions at Boulogne. Britain was fearful of a French invasion and an attack on the naval base at the port would deter these plans. The operation, in which Nelson did not take part personally, was a failure, and any future attempts were scuppered by the Treaty of Amiens, which gave peace to the two empires in March 1802.

The truce lasted all of 14 months as hostilities were renewed between the two nations. Nelson, now aboard HMS Victory, enforced a loose blockade on several French-held ports, encouraging the French to come out and fight. The strategy, although risky, succeeded when a convoy under the leadership of Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve bolted from Toulon and a chase to the Caribbean and back ensued. Nelson's preoccupation with Villeneuve worked in Napoleon's favour, as a significant amount of the Royal Navy was now out of position and unable to protect the Channel



An imagined portrait of Nelson in his vice-admiral uniform prior to the Battle of Trafalgar

and Britain's shoreline. The 350,000-strong Grande Armée was preparing for an invasion of southern England, but the Royal Navy returned in time to face off against the combined Franco-Spanish fleet in southern Spain in a headland off Cadiz known as Cape Trafalgar.

The final battle

Both sides knew that Trafalgar would go a long way in deciding the fate of the War of the Third Coalition. The Royal Navy looked to Nelson and HMS Victory for inspiration. The vice admiral had drilled his subordinates meticulously, so the minimum of tactical consultation would be required in the heat of battle. Nelson's 47th birthday was also celebrated shortly before the battle, during which he wined and dined 15 of his captains who would be leading the fleet at Trafalgar. He talked of how a combination of British spirit and gunnery expertise would lead them to victory. The traditional rigid tactics of yesteryear were done away with and the Franco-Spanish line would be broken by two British divisions, one led by Nelson and one led by Lord Cuthbert Collingwood.

Victory was in the thick of the action from the very start and the cavalier tactics were paying off as the British fleet gained the upper hand. However, the great commanders of history more often than not live and die by the sword. In the early afternoon of the battle, a French sniper perched in the rigging of the mast of Redoubtable spotted Nelson pacing along the quarterdeck of his ship. He was struck through the shoulder by a musket ball that lodged into his spine. Immediately carried below deck, there was little the ship's doctor could do with this mortal wound. As the battle raged on, the Royal Navy emerged victorious, but Nelson slowly slipped away.

The vice admiral's body was taken back to Britain after being soaked in a barrel of brandy that acted as a preservative. A full state funeral was held in London as the streets filled with people weeping at the sight of the coffin. King George was equally grief stricken and burst into tears upon hearing the news.

Horatio Nelson was buried in St Paul's Cathedral and his legacy lives on in a series of monuments erected in his honour. This was one man who definitely did his duty.

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An aerial, black and white photograph of the island of Malta during World War II. The island's terrain is visible, showing fields, roads, and buildings. Several fighter planes are in flight, some with the German cross insignia on their wings. A searchlight beam from the ground illuminates a path across the island. The title 'THE BATTLE FOR MALTA' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

THE BATTLE FOR MALTA

WORDS DOM RESEIGH-LINCOLN

In the skies above a small island in the Mediterranean, a battle raged amid the chaos of World War II that would send ripples across the entire conflict

By June 1940, the island of Malta remained an enduring problem for the Allies. On the one hand, it was the last Allied base between Gibraltar and Egypt, sat on the spine of a vitally important shipping route that could not only bolster troops overseas but also provide a platform for launching new counteroffensives against advancing Axis forces. It also played host to the headquarters of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet, which co-ordinated Allied naval movements in the region.

Conversely, it was also located just 117 miles from Sicily and a mere 400 miles from mainland Italy. Benito Mussolini's new fascist regime had declared war on the Allied nations and thrown its lot in with Hitler's Third Reich on 10 June, suddenly placing the small isle within the jaws of a new and militarised enemy. The fact the HQ of the Mediterranean Fleet was quickly moved to Alexandria to ensure its safety spoke volumes. By the mid-20th century, Malta was no longer a defiant stronghold – it was a humble trading post in an economically gratifying location. In short, it was deemed nigh-on indefensible.

However, Malta had to be defended. Despite its proximity to Italy, with its air and naval forces based in Sicily, losing control of the island and the shipping routes would essentially solidify the Axis campaign in North Africa indefinitely. As soon as Mussolini brought Italy into the war, he immediately initiated a spread of increased military activity across the Mediterranean. The Italians knew the key to taking Malta, and the rest of the region by default, wasn't by sea, but by air.

The Regia Aeronautica (Italian Air Force) began with an immediate bombing campaign across Malta, with 55 Savoia-Marchetti SM 79 bombers dropping 142 bombs on Hal Far, Ta' Qali and Luqa – the three main military airfields on the island. With 20 Macchi C 200 fighter planes in escort, the bombing run was a shocking and swift opening salvo. A few hours later, another run left from Sicily, with 38 bombers accompanied by 12 fighters razing the capital Valletta almost to the ground. Cruising at an altitude of 6,100 metres, which left the monitor HMS Terror and the gunships HMS Aphis and Ladybird muted in their attempts to bring them down, the assault faced no aerial opposition whatsoever. A total of eight raids were conducted across Malta in little more than a day.

That lack of opposition was the by-product of Malta becoming less of a priority in the eyes of Allied command as the war escalated elsewhere. A threadbare naval

German bombers pound the city of Valletta as a Macchi C 202 and Spitfire battle over the city



ISLAND DEFENCES

FOR TWO YEARS, THE COMBINED AIR AND NAVAL FORCES OF ITALY AND GERMANY LAID SIEGE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND WITH SIGNIFICANT MILITARY IMPORTANCE

01 Skirmish in the skies
The first phase of the Italian siege of Malta begins with 55 Italian bombers and 21 fighters dropping 142 bombs on three main Maltese airfields. A fighter squadron of Gloster Gladiators attempts to hold them at bay until the arrival of a contingent of Hawker Hurricanes.

03 The Axis resurgence
With Rommel concerned over the ever-diminishing Mediterranean supply lines to the Third Reich's campaign in North Africa, Hitler orders the Fliegerkorps II company to set up a new base in Sicily. Successful runs against British air bases and the sinking of a number of cruisers by German U-boats begin to turn the tide.

06 Ending the siege
By December 1942, British naval and air forces have grown strong enough to finally keep Axis air forces from attempting raids on Maltese targets. Even the return of the Luftwaffe in the summer of 1942 won't be enough to break the reinforced British defences and the siege comes to an end in November.



Ed Crooks

05 Operation Pedestal

With Germany unable to bolster the weaker Italian air and naval forces, the Royal Navy sends a huge convoy of 14 merchant ships to resupply Malta. Realising such a move would effectively end the conflict, Italy sends everything it has to meet them. Some supplies reach Malta, but more than 500 lives are lost.

02 Showdown at Valletta

By 1941, the RAF was keeping the IAF at bay, but not doing enough damage to end hostilities in the region for good. In response, Churchill sends the Royal Navy cruisers Aurora and Penelope and destroyers Lance and Lively to Malta. Known as 'Force K' this small but effective naval group will destroy half the axis supply lines to Africa and keep the Italian Navy from landing invasion troops.

04 British counter-attack

The initial arrival of squadrons of Spitfire Mark Vs does little to trouble the aggression of the Luftwaffe, but the sudden redirection of German air forces to support Rommel's campaign and a huge influx of extra Spitfires sees the skies finally retaken by the Royal Air Force.

presence patrolled its waters and a meagre selection of outdated Sea Gladiators were stationed on the island itself. The speed of the aerial bombardment meant the RAF pilots on call simply weren't prepared for such a force.

The siege begins

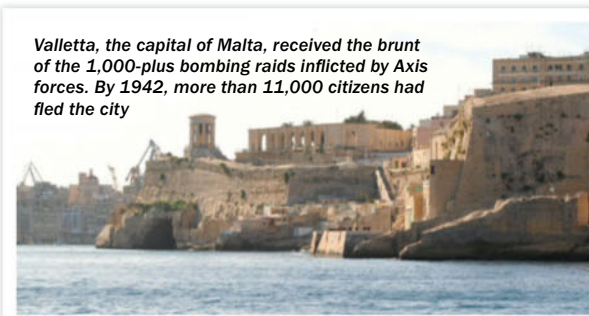
The RAF presence on Malta was slow to react to the swift strikes of the Italian Air Force (IAF). For the first ten days of the burgeoning siege, a set of four operational Sea Gladiator biplanes defended the skies over the island – and despite being woefully outnumbered, only two of the Gladiators were shot down before a squadron of 12 Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers flew in unexpectedly on 19 June from the Nazi-dominated South of France. The new craft (which formed the basis of the new 830 Naval Air Squadron) helped boost Malta's weak aerial defences before a contingent of Hawker Hurricanes arrived in early July to create the No 261 Squadron RAF.

With more aircraft at its disposal, the RAF was in a far better position to repel the Italian oppression, but the conflict was one of attrition, with both sides suffering significant losses – a situation made all the worse by a run of bad luck for the British. More Hawker Hurricanes were arriving in batches from August, but an attempt to fly 17 onto the island on 17 November 1940 went awry when eight of the fighters were lost. The fighters weren't even shot out of the sky – they had simply taken off too far west and had run out of fuel before reaching Malta.

However, for all its numbers, the IAF wasn't as strong or effective as its opening gambits had suggested. Its machines were neither as fast nor effective as those of the German Luftwaffe, so the comparatively small number of able craft defending Malta were able to hold out against the Italian attack. With Mussolini's naval forces proving equally ineffective at landing an invasion force, the Allies had time to mount a series of reinforcements. In short, for all their attempts to batter Malta into capitulation, Italy had failed to prove its mettle.

Once again, it would be in the Mediterranean skies that the course of the siege would be altered. Realising that Mussolini's aerial forces were failing to secure Malta and the surrounding region, Hitler ordered the Tripoli coast be lined with mines in order to drive back Agnew's attack force. In December 1941, Force K (which had now increased in size) fell foul of the minefield near Tripoli harbour and a number of ships were sunk or damaged irreparably. Hitler also ordered the creation of a new Luftflotte 2 command in Sicily in January 1942 – with a new Fliegerkorps II and X force ordered

Valletta, the capital of Malta, received the brunt of the 1,000-plus bombing raids inflicted by Axis forces. By 1942, more than 11,000 citizens had fled the city



THE BATTLE FOR MALTA

to finally break the defiant Malta defences. The Luftwaffe had arrived and the second siege of Malta could begin.

The second siege

By this point, the British craft defending the skies over Malta were barely holding themselves together. Cannibalised beyond recognition with spare parts, the Hawker Hurricanes were outdated models that simply weren't in a fit state to be in active circulation this long. The aircraft of the IAF were newer machines, but their pilots were just as young and inexperienced as their British counterparts – exacerbating the stalemate.

In February 1941, everything changed. A squadron of Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-7 fighters (belonging to the 7 Staffel Jagdgeschwader

26, led by infamous fighter pilot Oberleutnant Joachim Muncheberg) arrived and devastated the RAF forces. The Luftwaffe squadron barely registered a scratch in its opening confrontations, while the British lost 42 craft (20 of which were credited to Muncheberg alone).

Reinvigorated by the presence of the German fighters, the Axis campaign to take Malta intensified. Any attempt to bring supplies or reinforcements were raked by German gunfire, sunk or driven away from the island. Over Malta itself, the Axis performed 107 attacks in February, and another 105 in February.

Two months later, Hitler capitalised on the reeling Allied state in the Mediterranean and ordered the Fliegerkorps X to personally protect all Axis supply runs. They were also tasked with destroying any attempt to navigate supplies

through the region and finally bring Malta's defences to ruin.

The German domination over Malta was almost absolute. Over the course of its months-long campaign, the Luftwaffe dropped a staggering 2,500 tons of high explosives on the island, destroying more than 2,000 civilian structures (by comparison, the Italian siege resulted in only 300 destroyed buildings). Morale among its largely civilian population was at a low. Records suggest up to 60,000 people had left the major Maltese cities to seek shelter in the countryside. Staying in places such as Valletta was simply too dangerous.

The British resurgence

The success of the continuous raids left the German offensive partially complacent,

THE OPERATIONS ROOM

FROM AN UNDERGROUND NETWORK OF CHAMBERS, THE COMMANDERS OF MALTA'S OPERATIONS ORCHESTRATED ONE OF THE MOST DEFIANT DEFENCES OF WWII

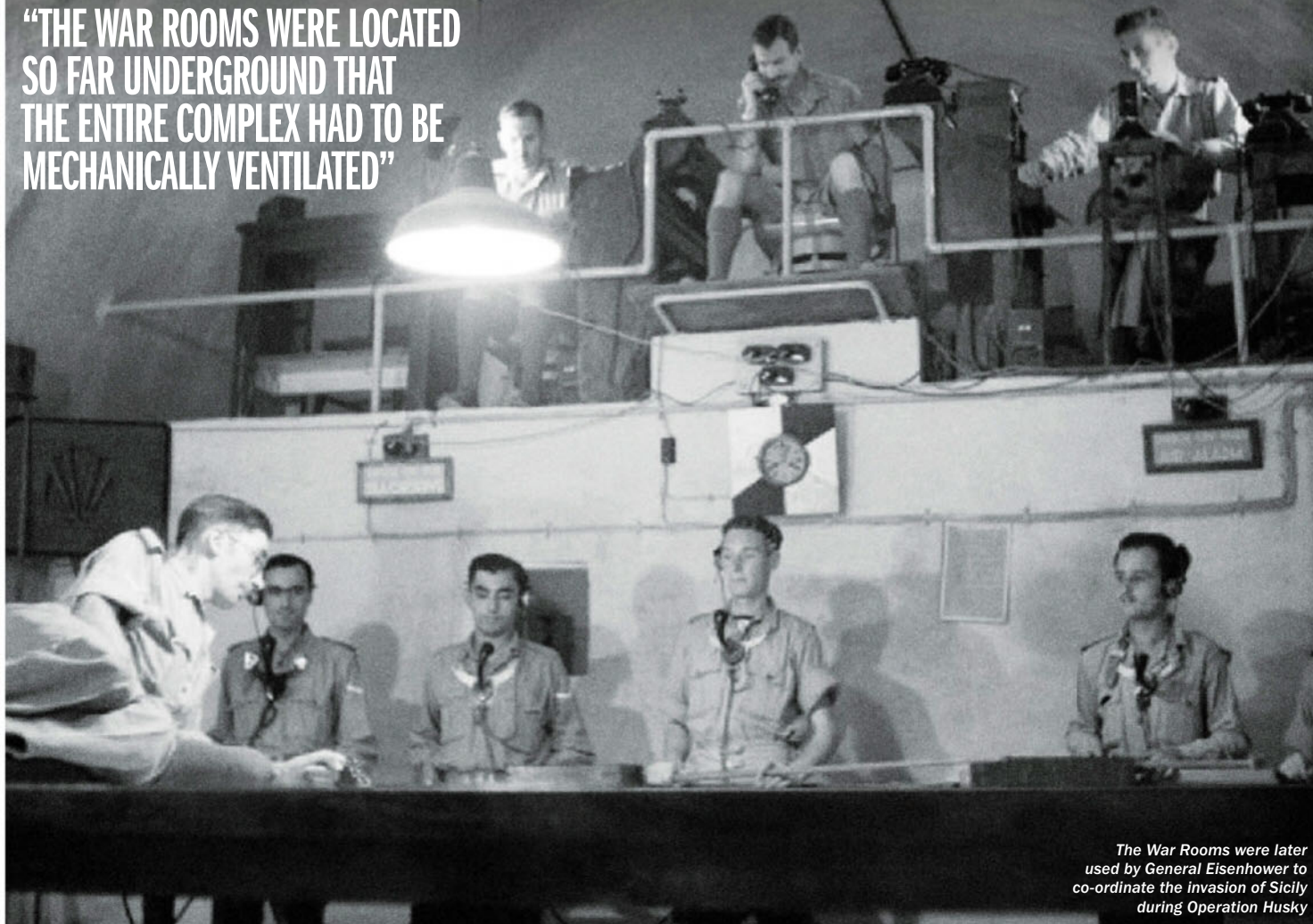
Located 150 feet beneath the Saluting Battery and the Barracca Gardens in Valletta, the Lascaris War Rooms were the heart of the Maltese defence during World War II. Consisting of a series of tunnels and chambers, the secret location had entire rooms dedicated to different areas of the ongoing war effort above.

Deep in the rock was RAF Sector Fighter Control Room, where the invaluable efforts of the Royal Air Force were co-ordinated; Anti Aircraft Gun Operations Room, which was responsible for commanding every one of the AA placements on the island; the Filter Room, which dealt with all ingoing and outgoing radar traffic; and the Combined

Operations Room, which played host to joint missions between the RAF and the Royal Navy.

The War Rooms were located so far underground that the entire complex had to be mechanically ventilated – a feature that still works to this day. The site survived World War II, but it did brush close to destruction during the Siege of Malta. Bombing by the Luftwaffe on 24 December 1941 pummelled Fort Lascaris, causing part of the building to collapse. Thankfully, the War Rooms survived relatively unharmed but it was a stark reminder just how much destruction the Axis bombers could inflict on the island.

“THE WAR ROOMS WERE LOCATED SO FAR UNDERGROUND THAT THE ENTIRE COMPLEX HAD TO BE MECHANICALLY VENTILATED”



The War Rooms were later used by General Eisenhower to co-ordinate the invasion of Sicily during Operation Husky

enabling the British to sneak in a few supplies and spares for their butchered planes. By April, Hitler recalled most of the Fliegerkorps X to assist in campaigns in Greece and Yugoslavia, but the Luftwaffe had left its mark on Malta forever – 1,465 strike, 1,144 fighter and 132 reconnaissance missions had been flown in the region with only 44 losses to account for.

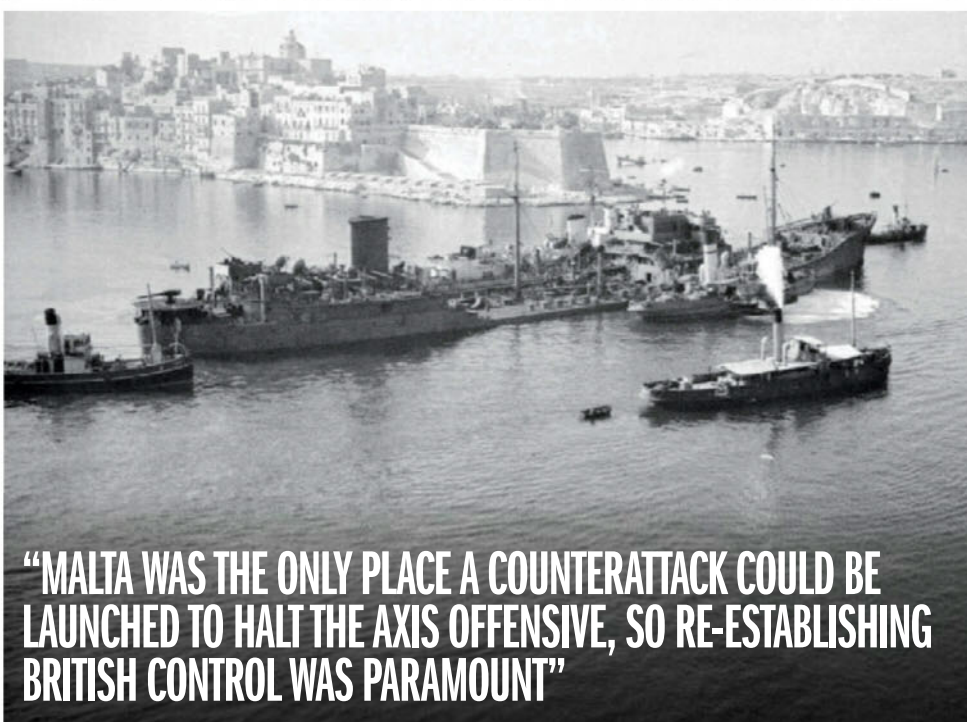
With the Regia Aeronautica left to continue the siege, the British took the chance to regain a foothold. There was also the question of the continuing fight in North Africa – with the Axis dominance in the Mediterranean, Rommel had made huge advances and was now pressing towards the Suez Canal and Alexandria itself. Malta was the only place a counterattack could be launched to halt the Axis offensive, so re-establishing British control was paramount.

While Operation Substance led a new counteroffensive to retake Maltese waters, the once-broken air defences of the RAF were suddenly reanimating with an influx of new fighters – including the first cannon-armed Hurricane Mc IICs. By the beginning of August, Malta had 75 fighters of its own and 230 anti-aircraft guns. As a launch base for anti-Axis attacks in North Africa, a total of 514 fighters passed through Malta.

With Malta now in ruder domestic health, the aim was to crush the supply lines to Rommel and the rest of the Axis forces in North Africa. In conjunction with the Royal Navy's submarine division, the RAF focused on attacking every German or Italian convoy that dared pass near Malta. By the end of September 1941, the combined effort had

Like any siege, the Battle of Malta was a conflict of attrition – wearing down morale as much as resources, attacking civilian targets in every bombing run

Below: Operation Pedestal and the successful resupplying of Malta came at a terrible cost, but it showed the Allied renewed focus on fortifying the island



“MALTA WAS THE ONLY PLACE A COUNTERATTACK COULD BE LAUNCHED TO HALT THE AXIS OFFENSIVE, SO RE-ESTABLISHING BRITISH CONTROL WAS PARAMOUNT”

✦ FAITH, HOPE & CHARITY

IN THE OPENING DAYS OF THE SIEGE, A FABLED SQUADRON OF THREE DARING PILOTS AND THEIR FIGHTER PLANES ARE SAID TO HAVE HELD THE MIGHT OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE AT BAY

Of all the stories and anecdotes that surround the defence of Malta between 1940 and 1942, none is more fascinating than the myth of Faith, Hope and Charity – three elderly Gloster Gladiator biplanes that supposedly defended the Maltese skies for ten days before the arrival of aerial reinforcements.

According to official records, a contingent of 18 Gloster Gladiators were delivered to the island by HMS Glorious in the early part of 1940, although it's unknown whether all of these craft were operational by this point. Given that the Sea Gladiator – and most biplane designs in general – were considered obsolete by the end of the 1930s, the argument that only a handful were cleared for use does hold some weight. We do know that at least four Gladiators were ready for flight – N5519, N5520, N5522 and N5531 – and that two of these fighters were destroyed by clashes with the far more manoeuvrable Savoia-Marchetti SM 79 Sparviero bombers and Fiat CR 42/Macchi MC 200 fighters of the IAF.

The myth surrounding Faith, Hope and Charity (names that were added to the story in the years after the siege took place by a Maltese newspaper) comes from the exploits of the Hal Far Fighter Flight unit, a squadron that operated in Malta during 1940. One Gloster Gladiator, of the original fabled three, is now on display in the National War Museum of Malta.

Below: Small numbers of fighters in the air at one time was a common tactic used by the Allied forces – both due to a lack of resources and a change in tactics later in the conflict



“TA’ QALI IN PARTICULAR HAD 841 TONS OF EXPLOSIVES DROPPED ON IT BECAUSE AXIS COMMAND WAS CONVINCED THE BRITISH HAD AN UNDERGROUND HANGAR SITUATED THERE”

The Axis concentrated on targeting towns and cities in an effort to starve Malta into submission



sunk 108 Axis ships – to put this in context, 96,000 tons of supplies were sent to bolster Rommel and more than 30,000 were annihilated by the resurgent RAF presence.

Enter the Spitfire

Rommel's campaign in North Africa was once again struggling now that the RAF and Royal Navy had strangled the supply lines to his offensive. In response, the Wehrmacht ordered the Luftwaffe to return in part to the Mediterranean. With the anticipation that the Soviet front was going to collapse at any moment, the Fliegerkorps II arrived in Sicily in January 1942. A total of 88 fighters made themselves known, destroying an attacking force of RAF Hurricanes as they crossed the sea for a bombing run. By March 1942, 20 RAF craft were shot down and eventually the Luftwaffe presence increased to a fearsome 425 machines.

Once again, the island was the victim of intense bombing raids by the combined forces of the Luftwaffe and the IAF. Both military and civilian sites were targeted, but the airfields took the brunt of the attacks – Ta' Qali in particular had 841 tons of explosive dropped on it because Axis command was convinced the British had an underground hangar situated there – they didn't.

By this stage, the Hurricanes were deemed ineffective against the return of the German air force – it was time to send in the Spitfires. By 7 March 1942, the first 15 Supermarine Spitfire Mark Vs arrived in Malta. Suddenly, the British forces in Malta finally had an aircraft that could not only match the faster German fighters, but outmanoeuvre them too.

However, the arrival of a superior machine did not turn the tide of the conflict. If anything, the Luftwaffe and Italian bombers attacked with even greater ferocity. By 21 April 1942, just 27 Spitfires were still airworthy – by the end of that night, only 17 remained. The Allies simply weren't sending enough Spitfires or experienced pilots to combat the relentless bombardment of the Axis. By 9 May, Malta had five full Spitfire squadrons, but by June, the Axis aerial forces had reached their peak and continued to pummel the Allies.

A paratrooper invasion of Malta was also planned – Operation Hercules would involve the German paratrooper division dropping in during a regular night-time raid, clearing key military targets before taking Valletta and its rumoured underground command post. However, events elsewhere would delay the invasion indefinitely and begin to strip away the air superiority the Luftwaffe had worked so hard to build. In the desert, Rommel's Afrika Korps had requested every shred of reinforcements that could be spared to see his campaign in Egypt brought to a successful close. This meant that the Sicilian aerial presence was gradually scaled down.

The arrival of Air Vice Marshal Keith Park, who assumed command of Malta's defences in July 1942, also had a significant impact. His experience in the Battle of Britain, and tactics for using small squadrons of three fighters, made all the difference. He drilled pilots into a three-minute turnaround from alert to takeoff, meaning the Spitfires were able to temper the guerrilla tactics of the Luftwaffe.

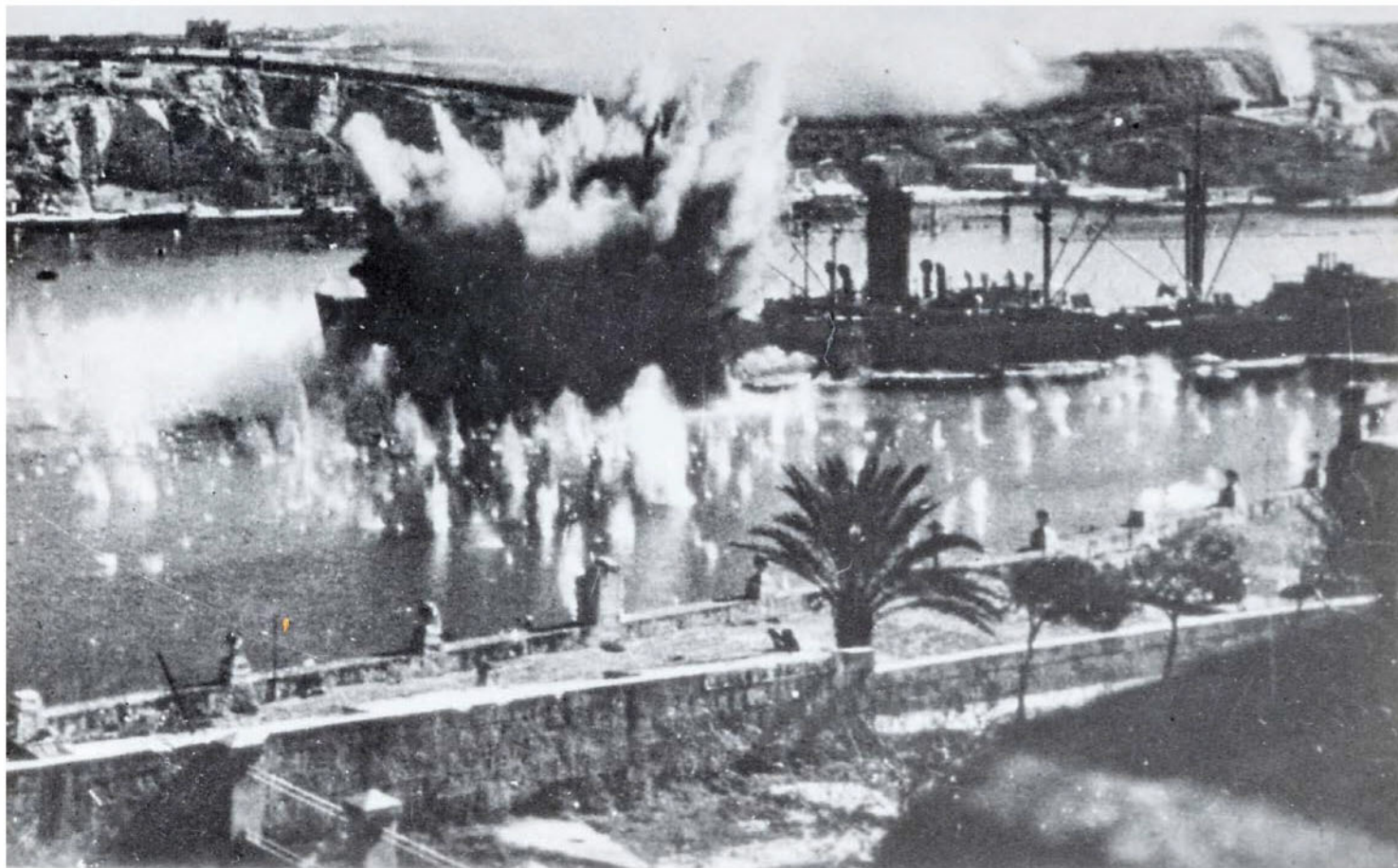
The survival of the island also owed much to Operation Pedestal, a daring, near-suicidal plan to deliver supplies, fuel and parts to

the Maltese defences. 14 ships entered the crosshairs of the Luftwaffe between 3 and 15 August, and only five reached Malta. The importance of these supplies can't be overstated, but they came at a terrible price – more than 500 sailors lost their lives in that operation alone.

As August rolled in, the Axis aerial capabilities continued to dwindle as the Luftwaffe was redirected to North Africa and Eastern Europe. Malta, on the other hand, took the opportunity to increase its strength. A total of 163 Spitfires were based on the island, with 120 ready for flight. However, August, September and October were as vicious periods as any other section of the siege. The Luftwaffe threw everything it could spare in the region against Malta – 46 German bombers and fighters were shot down, while 23 Spitfires were destroyed with another 20 forced to crash land. The battle ravaged either side, but the cracks were widening in the Axis assault.

The influx of more Spitfires and the dominance of British submarines on naval targets finally proved the Maltese defence would never relent. Rommel's offensive was crumbling in Egypt and taking Malta had simply become too costly to the wider Axis war effort. On 16 October, the offensive was called off. With the Soviets mounting a counterattack in the Battle of Stalingrad and significant Allied advances in North Africa, the siege was finally crumbling. Malta, beaten and bombarded for years, had prevailed in the face of overwhelming odds.

Below: A cargo ship comes under attack from the Luftwaffe as it enters Grand Harbour in Valletta



Images: Alamy, Ed Crooks, Getty

**“WHEREVER THE GURKHAS HAVE GONE,
THEY HAVE LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK
ON THEIR ENEMIES. THEY REMAIN
EQUALLY FEARED AND RESPECTED THE
WORLD OVER TO THIS DAY”**

*A Gurkha stands
guard during a
training exercise
in Kabul, 2004*



THE GURKHAS

WORDS DAVID SMITH



200 YEARS ON THE FRONTLINE

For two centuries, Britain has been able to call upon one of the world's most respected and feared military elites

Although the Gurkhas and British initially met as enemies during the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16, this was just the start of a military partnership that has stood the test of time. During this time, fighting with rather than against the British, the Gurkhas have proved to be among the most dedicated, disciplined and effective troops in the world, and have served the Crown loyally for two centuries.

In 2009, the Brigade of Gurkhas and Gurkha veterans became the centre of attention regarding the rights of Gurkha veterans to settle in the UK. With the celebrity backing of Joanna Lumley, the campaign was victorious. Today an even bigger crisis faces Gurkha families and veterans, as the 2015 earthquake in Nepal

continues to present a fearful and catastrophic natural enemy. The Gurkha Welfare Trust and other charitable organisations have turned their attention towards this crisis, supporting Gurkha veterans and their families.

Since the first recruits were signed in 1815, the Gurkhas have seen service, alongside British and Allied troops or on their own, from the harsh terrain of Afghanistan to the crowded streets of Hong Kong, the deserts of North Africa and the jungles of Borneo. Whether on the shores of Gallipoli, the slopes at Cassino or the brutal wilderness of Helmand Province, wherever the Gurkhas have gone, they have left an indelible mark on their enemies. They remain equally feared and respected the world over to this day.

**"KAATAR HUNNU
BHANDA MARNU
RAMRO"**

"BETTER TO DIE THAN LIVE A COWARD"

ORIGINS AND THE EMPIRE

THE BRITISH AND THE GURKHAS FIRST MET IN 1814 NOT AS FRIENDS, BUT AS ENEMIES

The British Empire was formally introduced to the Gurkhas at the Battle of Kalunga, on 31 October 1814. It was not a pleasant experience for the British, as the 650 Nepalese soldiers, ensconced in a hill fort, resisted some 4,000 British and Indian troops for almost a month, killing Major General Sir Rollo Gillespie in the process. The clash did, however, engender a mutual respect that lasts to this day. Within a year of the clash the British were recruiting these tough mountain warriors, even though the war with the Nepalese would rumble on until March 1816.

War between Nepal and Britain was inevitable; both were pursuing an expansionist policy in

northern India. The seriousness with which the British viewed the threat from Nepal was illustrated by the size of the force despatched to subdue the land. No less than 30,000 soldiers, 12,000 Indian auxiliaries and 60 guns were amassed for a job that took two years and ended with the Treaty of Segauli. This paved the way for the formation of official Gurkha battalions within the private army of the East India Company, but the first men had actually been recruited the previous year.

The Gurkhas fitted neatly into the developing British ideology of the 'martial races' - tribes and nations that were perceived to have a peculiar aptitude for warfare. Already encompassing the

Scottish Highlanders, the theory now embraced the Gurkhas and would later accept the Sikhs. The British, however, did not recognise all of Nepal as worthy of this distinction.

The country had been unified in the second half of the 18th century by Prithvi Narayan, who expanded from his power base at Ghorka. After unification, Nepal had continued to push its borders outwards, attracting first the attention and then the suspicion of the British.

Distinct regional identities remained, of course, and the British were most impressed by three groups: the Gurung, the Magars and the Chhetri from the temperate region of Nepal known as the 'Hills'. The Gurung and Magars are of Mongolian origin, while the Chhetri trace their routes back to Indian immigrants from the 12th century.

Four battalions were formed and accepted into the army of the East India Company in April 1816: the Sirmoor Battalion, the Kumaon Battalion and two Nusseree (friendly) battalions. They settled down to garrison life in northern India, probably not suspecting that their descendants would still be serving in British forces 200 years later.

"IT WAS NOT A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE FOR THE BRITISH, AS THE 650 NEPALESE SOLDIERS, ENSCONCED IN A HILL FORT, RESISTED SOME 4,000 BRITISH AND INDIAN TROOPS FOR ALMOST A MONTH"



Captain Balbhadra Kunwar commanded the Gurkhas at the Battle of Kalunga

GURKHA RECRUITS

AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, GAINING ENTRY TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S ELITE UNITS IS NOT EASY, AND MANY THOUSANDS FAIL EACH YEAR

The first Gurkha recruits were accepted by Lieutenant Frederick Young, who had participated in the siege at Kalunga, but official recruitment started with the adoption of the first four Gurkha battalions a year later. Initially, recruits sometimes had to be smuggled out of Nepal as there was no co-operation from the Nepalese authorities. Recruitment was still discouraged as late as 1885, but has since evolved into a highly ritualised format that ensures only the very finest candidates enter the British Army.

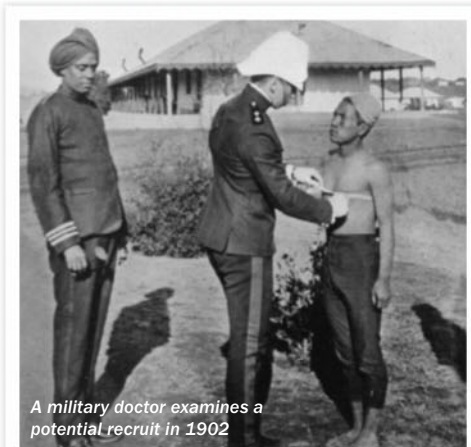
The Doko Race is considered the most challenging element of the selection process

✂ OPEN-DOOR POLICY

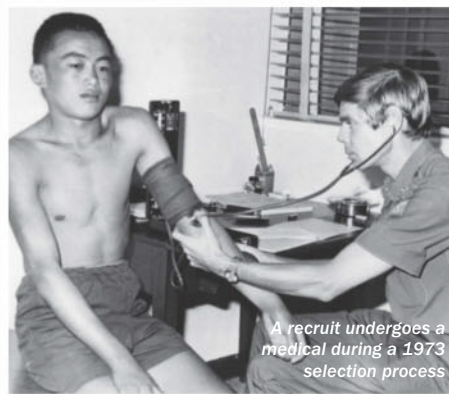
While it's true that recruitment initially focused on the areas identified by the British as home to so-called 'martial' tribes, this distinction has long been dropped. Now, the British Army welcomes applicants from all parts of Nepal, and the recruitment process promises candidates a "free, fair and transparent" assessment.

✂ INITIAL PHASE

The process gets under way with an advertising campaign that starts in April. 'Galah wallas' (now known as 'senior recruit assistants') travel the country to explain how the recruitment process works. The appropriate age (between 17 and a half and 21 years of age as of January), height (minimum of 158 centimetres), weight (minimum of 50 kilograms), chest size (at least 79 centimetres) and education (the equivalent of five mid-grade GCSEs) are essential to progress. Candidates must also have no more than four fillings or missing teeth.



A military doctor examines a potential recruit in 1902



A recruit undergoes a medical during a 1973 selection process

✂ REGIONAL SELECTION

July and September see those recruits who have made it through the initial phase move on to the Regional Selection process. Two bases, in Pokhara and Dharan, are used for this stage. Over a full day, recruits are given more thorough physical and medical examinations and are interviewed by both Nepalese and British Gurkha officers. The top 250 recruits from each station are forwarded to the final stage – a small return from the many thousands who apply each year.

✂ CENTRAL SELECTION

The three-week selection process that takes place at Pokhara is known as Central Selection. In 2014, almost 8,000 applicants had been whittled down to just 500 by this stage. Only 230 would be offered places in the British Army.

Candidates must cover an 800-metre run in no more than two minutes and 40 seconds and a 1.5-mile run in no more than nine minutes and 40 seconds, as well as performing at least 70 sit-ups in a two-minute period and at least 12 underarm pull-ups.

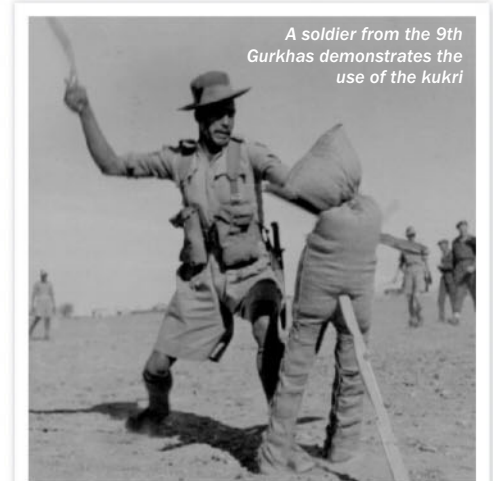
✂ THE DOKO RACE

The last physical test of Central Selection is a five-kilometre run, including a 400-metre ascent, in a 48-minute time limit. A final twist asks the recruits to haul a 'doko' (a basket carried by a strap around the forehead) weighing 25 kilograms. Many recruits collapse after completing the course, and they won't hear whether they were under the time limit until the following day.

✂ THE EXAM

As well as being tested physically, the young men must also demonstrate mental ability. The need to quickly understand and follow orders in English is of paramount importance, and the written tests are almost as daunting as the doko race.

An essay of two pages or so must be written on a given subject, while a comprehension test involves listening to a lengthy talk from an English officer and then demonstrating a solid understanding of what has been said.



A soldier from the 9th Gurkhas demonstrates the use of the kukri

Below: The battered remains of Hindu Rao's House, defended by a force including the Sirmoor Battalion of Gurkhas during the Indian Mutiny



Gurkhas depicted descending a near-vertical cliffside during action on the Afghan border in 1897



FRONTIER FIGHTERS

GARRISON DUTY MIGHT SOUND DULL; IT WAS ANYTHING BUT FOR THE GURKHAS

The Gurkhas began their history with the British as garrison soldiers in northern India. The British, unsurprisingly, viewed them as the ideal soldiers for operations in this rugged landscape. The four battalions had become three following the merging of the two Nusseree units. The new Nusseree Battalion was based at Dharamsala, the Sirmoor Battalion at Dehra Dun and the Kumaon Battalion at Almorah.

The first serious engagement involving the Gurkhas saw 350 men of the Sirmoor Battalion capture an insurgent stronghold near Koonja, in October 1824. As well as showcasing the fighting abilities of the Gurkhas (the insurgents, known as 'dacoits' put up fierce resistance and outnumbered the Gurkhas by more than two to one), it also added a layer to Gurkha tradition when an improvised battering ram was used to get into the fort: a silver ram's head is still displayed on the cross-belts of officers in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

The siege of Bhurtpore, in 1826, saw 200 men from the Nusseree and Sirmoor Battalions serve as skirmishers to screen the men who were placing a massive mine beneath the city walls, while the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1846 saw the Nusseree and Sirmoor Battalions engaged in heavy fighting at the Battles of Aliwal and Sobraon, with both battalions taking severe casualties.

The Indian Mutiny of 1857 gave the Gurkhas the chance to demonstrate not only their fighting qualities but also their loyalty. The heroic three-month defence of Hindu Rao's House on the outskirts of Delhi – in which 650 men of the Sirmoor Battalion suffered a casualty rate in excess of 50 per cent – cemented their reputation, and the battalion later participated in the re-taking of Delhi. Tangible reward came in the form of the Queen's Truncheon, still an object of great pride for today's Royal Gurkha Rifles.

The Gurkhas played only a minor role in the First Afghan War of 1839-42, but were heavily involved in the second (1878-80). Britain, concerned that Russia might use Afghanistan as a route into India, was highly suspicious of any apparent harmony between the Afghans and Russia, and put an army together in 1878 to tackle the problem. Now numbering five regiments, the Gurkhas were an integral part of the army and the units took it in turns to distinguish themselves in engagements at Peiwar Kotal, Kabul and Kandahar.

More action followed with the Black Mountain Campaign of 1888, the Tirah Campaign of 1897-98 and the expedition into Tibet of 1903. It was a turbulent time for the Gurkhas, but there was much more to come.

THE GREAT WAR: 1914-18

FROM TRENCHES TO DESERT, THE GURKHAS' EXPERIENCES IN WORLD WAR I WERE VARIED

The outbreak of World War I saw Gurkha numbers increase dramatically. From a starting point of ten two-battalion regiments (each styled 'Gurkha Rifles'), numbers swelled throughout the conflict and a total of 90,780 fought in various theatres, with more than 6,000 losing their lives.

Six of the existing 20 battalions were sent to Europe as part of the Indian Corps, with Second Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles being the first to see front-line action on 29 October 1914. Although better suited to their native environment, the Gurkhas adapted to the very different experience of European warfare as best they could, but losses were high. Just a day after going into action, 2/8th had suffered more than 200 casualties.

In April 1915, three further Gurkha battalions played their part in operations at Gallipoli, having been specifically requested by General Sir Ian Hamilton to join the fighting. The Gurkha battalions suffered

terribly in the desperate battle, with 2/10th experiencing a shocking 40 per cent casualty rate over a seven-week period.

In Mesopotamia (now Iraq), 2/7th Gurkha Rifles was part of the 12th Division commanded by Major General George F Goringe. In a move along the Euphrates river and subsequent actions against Turkish positions at Nasiriya in June-July 1915, 2/7th lost almost half its men, with illness and the harsh climate taking as heavy a toll as the defending Turks. The regiment was captured by the Turks on 29 September 1916, following an ill-advised push on Baghdad.

Five Gurkha battalions played their part in the subsequent capture of Baghdad by General Frederick Maude. A 165,000-strong army first pushed the Turks out of Kut and then took Baghdad in March 1917. The Palestine Campaign also saw heavy Gurkha involvement, with General Sir Edmund Allenby's army including six Gurkha battalions.



Top: Gurkhas are seen here sharpening their kukris in France, during the Great War

Above: Men from the 1/9th Gurkhas in the trenches of Flanders in 1915

“ALTHOUGH BETTER SUITED TO THEIR NATIVE ENVIRONMENT, THE GURKHAS ADAPTED TO THE VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE OF EUROPEAN WARFARE AS BEST THEY COULD”



The 1/6th Gurkhas assaulting Ottoman positions at the Battle of Sari Bair

“GURUNG WENT ON TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY ATTACK FIVE JAPANESE POSITIONS, INCLUDING FOUR FOXHOLES AND A MACHINE-GUN POST”

Taken during WWII, this picture is a re-creation of men from the 9th Gurkhas advancing in North Africa, with kukris drawn

GURKHA HEROES OF WWII

GURKHA NUMBERS AGAIN EXPANDED DRAMATICALLY AS THE WORLD WENT TO WAR FOR A SECOND TIME IN 1939

The escalating nature of World War II saw the British call on an increasing supply of Gurkhas for operations in various theatres. Third, fourth and even fifth battalions were added to existing regiments throughout the war to boost the numbers available.

Principle areas in which the Gurkhas saw action during the war included north Africa, the Middle East, Italy and Burma. In all regions, the Gurkhas' reputation for hardiness and courage was enhanced. More than 2,000 gallantry medals were awarded including 12 Victoria Crosses, with no fewer than eight VCs awarded in 1944 alone.

The Gurkhas experienced mixed fortunes. In North Africa, Gurkha units engaged in a to-and-fro struggle with Rommel's Afrika Korps, with two battalions being captured during the German assault on Tobruk. In Italy, Gurkhas took part in fierce fighting in a doomed attempt to capture the German-held monastery at Cassino, while in the Malay Peninsula, three battalions were taken prisoner by the Japanese.

There were victories as well, of course. Gurkha units took part in the successful British offensive against Rommel, five battalions helped defend the critical bridge over the Sittang River as Japanese troops pushed on Rangoon, and Gurkhas were also prominent in the Chindit operations in Burma.

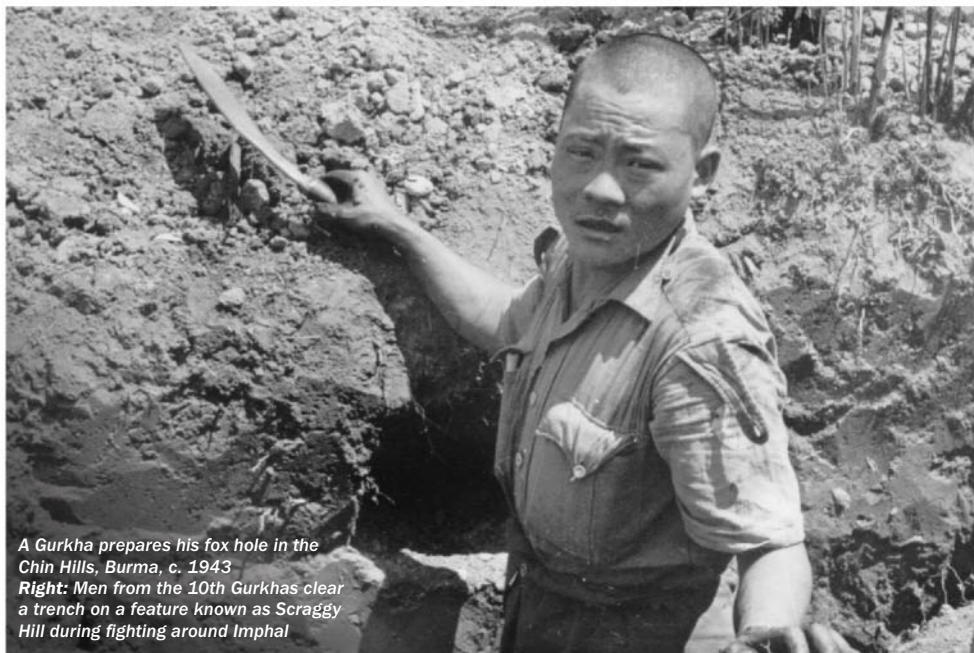
It is worth noting the extraordinary co-operation of the nation of Nepal in this effort. Recruitment into the Nepalese Army was suspended to fulfil British requests and approximately 138,000 Gurkhas served during the war, with more than 7,500 losing their lives and a further 1,441 declared missing, presumed dead.

SUBEDAR LALBAHADUR THAPA NORTH AFRICA

During the British assault on Wadi Akarit in April 1942, a division under Major General Francis Taker advanced up a mountain known as the Fatnassa Massif, with Gurkha units to the fore. Subedar Lalbahadur Thapa, from D Company, 1/2nd Gurkhas, single-handedly knocked out one German machine-gun position and then attacked a second with his kukri, opening up the enemy position for Taker's division and winning the Victoria Cross in the process.

48TH BRIGADE SOUTH-EAST ASIA

As British forces fell back before the Japanese advance through Burma in 1942, there was a very real danger of the entire force being captured, as Japanese units attempted to cut off the retreat. The 48th Brigade, at the time an all-Gurkha unit, formed the rearguard as the British force retreated towards India. Already severely weakened from earlier actions (1/3rd Gurkhas had lost more than 500 men out of its original strength of 750), the Gurkhas nevertheless held the Japanese at bay and the battered army reached safety.



A Gurkha prepares his fox hole in the Chin Hills, Burma, c. 1943
Right: Men from the 10th Gurkhas clear a trench on a feature known as Scraggy Hill during fighting around Imphal

THE KUKRI

THE GURKHAS' ICONIC KNIVES ARE INSTANTLY RECOGNISABLE, BY FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE



As famous as the samurai sword and the American Bowie knife, the kukri has a rich tradition stretching back hundreds of years. Theories on the origins of the kukri include that it evolved from the 13th-century knives used by the Mallas. More fancifully, it has been linked to the curved blades of Alexander the Great's cavalymen. What is more certain is that the knife in its current form has been crafted by the 'Kami' clan of blacksmiths in Nepal since at least as far back as 1627.

Measuring between 14 and 16 inches in length (a longer version is used for ceremonial purposes), the curved blade is made of steel while the handle can be of bone, wood or sometimes metal. It can be used both as a slashing weapon and in a stabbing motion, and

its short length makes it a highly effective close-combat knife.

One theory for the stubby design of the knife is that anything longer would have proved unwieldy on the steep slopes of Nepal's Hills region, and the fact that the kukri has always been a utility tool as well as a weapon adds credence to this.

The Nepalese warriors encountered by the British in 1814 wielded these distinctive and fearsome weapons, and the blades have become synonymous with the Gurkhas – crossed kukris are part of the regimental badge of all existing Gurkha units.

Boys in Nepal are used to handling kukris from an early age, and it is this familiarity with the knives that helps the Gurkhas use them so effectively. Needless to say, a little myth has woven itself into

Left: The distinctive notch in the kukri blade, known as the 'kaura', is a religious symbol, although some have postulated that it can also be used to catch and deflect the blade of an enemy, or to prevent blood from running onto the handle

the tradition.

The idea that a kukri must taste blood after being drawn is nothing more than a colourful legend, but some tribal groups did believe that it was disrespectful of the blade not to put it to use after being drawn, even if only to slice vegetables.

FIRST BATTALION, 9TH GURKHAS MEDITERRANEAN

During fierce fighting at Cassino in March 1944, 1/9th Gurkhas was part of the 4th Indian Division, tasked with capturing a point of high ground below the German-held monastery of Monte Cassino. The ground, ominously named 'Hangman's Hill', was taken by the Gurkhas and held for nine days despite constant artillery bombardment from the Germans. Despite their bravery, Monte Cassino could not be taken and the Gurkhas were forced to withdraw from their hard-earned position.



RIFLEMAN SHER BHADUR THAPA MEDITERRANEAN

Courage can be displayed in many ways, as Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa, of 1/9th Gurkhas, proved in September 1944. Spotting a wounded Gurkha, Thapa braved enemy gunfire to sprint out and pick up his fallen comrade, returning him to safety. Thapa had already charged a German machine-gun post, knocking it out of action, but his luck ran out when attempting to rescue a second fallen comrade, as he died in a hail of machine-gun fire. His family received his posthumous Victoria Cross the following year.



RIFLEMAN TULBAHADUR PUN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

As well as collective achievement, the Second Chindit Operation saw many instances of personal bravery. Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun won his Victoria Cross during an attack on a

"FINDING HIMSELF THE ONLY UNWOUNDED MEMBER OF HIS SECTION, HE PICKED UP A BREN GUN AND ATTACKED A KEY JAPANESE POSITION"

railway bridge at Mogaung in June 1944. Finding himself the only unwounded member of his section, he picked up a Bren gun and attacked a key Japanese position known as the 'Red House'. Eventually capturing the position, he then continues to provide supporting fire while the rest of his platoon advanced.

SUBEDAR NETRABHADUR THAPA SOUTH-EAST ASIA

The defence of Mortar Bluff, in June 1944, may have ended in failure, but it is rightfully remembered as one of the Gurkhas' finest hours. Subedar Netrabhadur Thapa commanded a small defensive unit against a Japanese attack, taking the fight to the Japanese when supplied with fresh ammunition and grenades. Thapa was killed during the counterattack and the position was taken by the Japanese, but his bravery (he was found the next day still holding his kukri) earned him a posthumous Victoria Cross.

RIFLEMAN BHANBHAGTA GURUNG SOUTH-EAST ASIA

During fighting in Burma in March 1945, Rifleman Bhanbhagta Gurung proved to be a one-man army. After first coolly despatching a Japanese sniper, Gurung went on to single-handedly attack five Japanese positions, including four foxholes and a machine-gun post. Using his rifle, bayonet, grenades and kukri, he helped his unit capture a key position.





THE NEXT GENERATION OF GURKHAS

POST-WORLD WAR II, THE GURKHAS HAVE RISEN TO MYRIAD CHALLENGES DESPITE EVER-DECREASING NUMBERS

Following Indian Independence in 1947, only four (2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th) of the ten Gurkha regiments joined the British Army, with the remainder staying with the Indian Army. Over nearly 70 years since the split, Gurkha numbers have been steadily cut, with a target for the current Brigade of Gurkhas of just 2,617 for 2020.

Despite the steady reduction in numbers, the Gurkhas have seen action in Malaya, Brunei, Borneo, Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. They remain one of the world's elite fighting forces.

Soldiers from the 2nd The Royal Gurkha Rifles prepare for a patrol in Helmand, Afghanistan, 2011

THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

The Gurkhas were given the chance to once more demonstrate their mastery of jungle warfare during a 12-year campaign (1948-60) against the communist terrorists (CT) of the Malayan Races Liberation Army.

In what was surely the only military campaign the British have fought against an enemy commander who possessed an MBE (MRLA leader Chin Peng had been recognised for his efforts when fighting the Japanese during World War II), the Gurkhas recovered from early setbacks to force CT units to withdraw further into the jungle. The granting of Malayan independence in 1957 also removed much of the impetus behind the MRLA cause.

THE BORNEO CONFRONTATION

More jungle warfare came when Indonesian-backed forces pushed into Borneo in 1963. The Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBT) was commanded by Indonesian Army regulars, and more regular units became involved as the conflict progressed. The equally matched opponents waged a deadly war in the jungle, but it was

only when the British stepped off the back foot (they had initially concentrated on responding to border incursions) and began moving into Indonesian territory that they started to see real progress.

The formation of a Gurkha paratrooper company helped tip the balance of the three-year conflict, which cost the lives of 43 Gurkhas.



As part of operations during the Borneo Confrontation, Gurkhas patrol on the Limbang River in 1965



The First Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles demonstrate kukri fighting on 19 July 2007



THE FALKLANDS WAR

The Gurkhas' impact on the Falklands War was out of all proportion to the actual service they saw. As part of the task force assembled to liberate the islands, which Argentina had invaded in April 1982, 1/7th Gurkhas sailed on the QE2 in May.

Propaganda stories showed the Gurkhas sharpening their kukris ready for battle, and even though most of the fighting was over by the time they arrived, they had clearly put the fear of god into the Argentinians, many of who were young conscripts. In the final action around Port Stanley, Argentinian troops apparently surrendered to the Scots Guards to avoid facing the Gurkhas.



The Royal Gurkha Rifles patrol a street in Helmand Province in 2010

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST



Established in 1969, the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT, registered charity No. 1103669) is focused on providing financial and medical support for elderly Gurkha veterans and their widows in Nepal who rely on the Trust for a secure old age. For those who are unable to live independently, it offers residential care.

The series of earthquakes that began in April 2015 devastated the Gurkha homeland – over 30,000 people were killed or injured, and millions lost their homes.

With support from Gurkha soldiers despatched to Nepal, the GWT responded to provide medical aid and distribute emergency supplies in isolated rural areas.

The GWT relies on the generosity of the general public to support its welfare relief. For more information on the work of the GWT, and to donate to its Earthquake Response Fund, please visit www.gwt.org.uk.

AFGHANISTAN

The first Gurkha unit was deployed to Afghanistan in 2001. Having a natural affinity with the Afghans, the Gurkhas have served with distinction ever since, training Afghan National Army personnel and helping to win 'hearts and minds'. Inevitably, there has been combat as well, especially following the move into Helmand Province in 2006.

Some things, it seems, will always remain the same with the Gurkhas, as one of their most recent awards for bravery makes clear. Lance Corporal Tuljung Gurung earned a Military Cross in 2013 for seeing off two insurgents, not with his rifle, but with his kukri.

“ARGENTINIAN TROOPS APPARENTLY SURRENDERED TO THE SCOTS GUARDS TO AVOID FACING THE GURKHAS”

THE MODERN BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES (RGR) STRENGTH: 1,261

This two-battalion regiment of a 'light-role' battalion based in the UK and a 'jungle-role' battalion in Brunei comprises almost exactly half the strength of the Brigade of Gurkhas. Their main barracks is at Shorncliffe and the regiment celebrates its birthday on 1 July.

THE QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS (QGE) STRENGTH: 295

69 Gurkha Field Squadron and 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron are headed by a Regimental HQ to make up the QGE, which is part of 36 Engineer Regiment. The history of this unit goes back to the creation of the first Gurkha sapper unit in 1948. The regiment is based at Maidstone.

THE QUEEN'S OWN GURKHA LOGISTIC REGIMENT (QOGLR) STRENGTH: 439

The Royal Logistics Corps provides fighting forces with the supplies they need to do their job. Within this corps, ten Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment is recognised as an elite unit, comprising 1 Squadron, 28 Squadron and 36 HQ Squadron. The regiment is based at Aldershot.

QUEEN'S GURKHA SIGNALS (QGS) STRENGTH: 484

Within the Royal Corps of Signals, a combat support arm, three squadrons comprise the Queen's Gurkha Signals, which was first established during the Malayan Emergency. Their main barracks is at Nuneaton, although the regiment also has men in Nepal, Brunei and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

THE BAND OF THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS STRENGTH: 45

Belonging to the Brigade of Gurkhas rather than the Corps of Army Music, the Band was originally formed in 1859. New musicians needed to be found when all existing bandsmen opted to stay with Indian regiments following Indian independence in 1947, but the unit was successfully reformed in 1949. It is based at Shorncliffe.

GURKHA STAFF AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT (GSPS) STRENGTH: 93

Formed in June 2011 (prior to this they had been known as the Gurkha Clerks), this company provides services including accounting, IT support, HR and personnel support and business administration to all units within the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Great Battles

THE KURSK SALIENT, SOVIET UNION, 5-13 JULY, 1943

KURSK

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

Soviet T-34s roll into battle at Kursk with infantry in support

As the invasion of the Soviet Union stalled, two mechanised heavyweights came face to face in the largest clash of armour the world has ever seen

The last major German offensive on the Eastern Front, 1943's Operation Citadel saw Hitler launch a colossal attack on the Kursk salient, or bulge. It was a move that he believed would provide a victory so bright it would "shine like a beacon around the world." This was a battle of the elite, with both German and Soviet armies near their apex in terms of skill and weaponry, hardened by two years of unrelenting warfare.

The Germans, though depleted in manpower, were, for the first time since the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, fielding qualitative superiority in terms of armour with the formidable Tiger I tanks and new Panthers. These outstripped the Soviet T-34 Model 43s, which had in the intervening years, with

their sloped armour and 76.2mm gun, proved masters of the battlefield.

The Red Army, meanwhile, was a very different beast from that which had faced the German invasion during Operation Barbarossa two years earlier. At the beginning of 1943, more than 16 million men were under arms, supported by a vast number of artillery pieces. Stalin claimed that "artillery is the god of war," and by 1943, the Red Army boasted the largest and most effective artillery divisions in the world. It also had somewhere approaching 10,000 tanks.

At Kursk, these two heavily mechanised forces came together in an enclosed theatre of operations, like two mighty pugilists meeting for a final championship bout. The result was a watershed. "Stalingrad was the end of the

beginning," said Winston Churchill, "but the Battle of Kursk was the beginning of the end."

The German plan was to launch a double envelopment against the Kursk salient using Army Group Centre in the north, specifically Colonel-General Model's Ninth Army, while Army Group South battered the southern section with Army Detachment Kempf and Colonel-General Hoth's formidable Fourth Panzer Army. This was an awe-inspiring demonstration of German strength, with 2,700 tanks and assault guns taking to the field.

For Stalin and his senior army commanders, Marshals Zhukov and Vasilevsky, the plan was to launch a massive offensive by first wearing down the mobile German forces in a battle-slog around the Kursk sector. They would use



GREAT BATTLES

*Soviet soldiers wait as a
T-34 crosses a trench*

**“IN FACT, THE GERMAN
HIGH COMMAND WAS USING
SIMILAR TACTICS TO THOSE
EMPLOYED BY MONTGOMERY
AT EL ALAMEIN”**



three Fronts (the Soviet equivalent of an Army Group) – Central Front, Voronezh Front and the reserve Steppe Front – to grind down German mechanised forces and thereby leave their territories vulnerable to huge counter offensives.

In his bid to snare the German armour, Stalin ordered the transformation of the region into what historian and Kursk expert Dennis E Showalter believes to be “the most formidable large-scale defensive system in the history of warfare”: a triple-ringed matrix absorbing almost 1 million men, 20,000 guns and mortars, 300 rocket launchers and 3,300 tanks. Russian engineers uncoiled more than 500 miles of barbed wire and lay almost 650,000 mines. The Germans’ only chance, says Showalter, was the might of the steel-headed sledgehammer they eventually swung in July.

That blow came on 5 July, after several days of preliminaries involving the German and Soviet air forces and the roar of countless heavy guns. Tank armadas were suddenly on the move, with the Germans committing squadrons of 100 and in some cases 200 machines or more, with a score of Tiger Is and Ferdinand assault guns in the vanguard. Groups of 50 or so medium tanks came next and then floods of infantry, protected by this armoured screen, moved in behind.

These German armoured wedges were known as ‘Panzerkeil’ and, according to the late historian Alan Clark, amount to a rejection of the traditional principles of the panzer army. In fact, the German high command was using similar tactics to those employed by Montgomery at El Alamein, with the difference here that the defenders’ armour was at numerical parity with the attackers’, or was indeed greater, and their defensive organisation meant that many of their tanks were held in reserve. This proved decisive during the mighty clash at Prokhorovka.

As 5 July unfolded, Colonel-General Model in the north committed more than 500 armoured vehicles from his Ninth Army to the attack in a series of staggered bursts, but so violent was the Soviet resistance that about half of these were out of action by the day’s end. Part of the problem stemmed from the committing of both battalions of the Porsche-built Ferdinands to the attack. These were formidable machines, also known as ‘elephants’, were designed for tank-busting and the destruction of large anti-tank guns. Their 200mm-thick armour provided them with ample protection from static gun positions. Their enormous 88mm cannons, meanwhile, picked off Russian T-34s before they even had chance to come within range.

However, the Ferdinands became separated from the lighter tanks and infantry they needed for close-range support. With their static hulls and lack of machine guns, they proved sitting ducks for Soviet infantry units, who boarded them while they were on the move and squirted flamethrowers over the engine ventilation slats. The Ferdinands, however, ploughed through the first line of Soviet defences, allowing the infantry to eventually follow them into the breach, but more than half these beasts of war were lost.

The morning of 5 July also saw the Fourth Panzer Army launch its main offensive thrust in the south, moving along a 30-mile front. According to Kursk expert Mark Healey, 700 tanks and assault guns smashed their huge metal fist into the face of the Soviet Sixth Guards Army on the Voronezh Front, but the Russian defences were so tightly entrenched that the German attack stalled. Eventually, the Luftwaffe’s aerial superiority began to take effect and the Fourth Panzer managed to split the Sixth Guards Army in two.

The fighting in both the north and south of the salient was ferocious, and within 12 hours both sides were feeding the fires that raged across the battle for Kursk. Swathes of ground-attack aircraft strafed the battlefields. The armour



“THEY PROVED SITTING DUCKS FOR SOVIET INFANTRY UNITS, WHO BOARDED THEM WHILE THEY WERE ON THE MOVE AND SQUIRTED FLAMETHROWERS OVER THE ENGINE VENTILATION SLATS”

German heavy armour crosses a Soviet defensive ditch near Belgorod

continued to mass and move “on a scale unlike anything seen elsewhere in the war,” according to the eminent historian John Erickson.

The Soviet tank armies responded to the German assault by moving up into their primary defensive positions and somewhere approaching 7,000 tanks were steadily drawn into this immense clash of steel, leaving an ever-growing number of dying hulls smoking on the battlefields. A Russian communiqué claimed that on the first day of battle, 586 German panzers were destroyed or disabled.

The second day of Citadel, 6 July, was heavily overcast and rain hampered both sides throughout. Along the northern sections of the Kursk salient, the Soviets launched a dawn counterattack with General Rokossovsky's Central Front enjoying temporary success, until a force of 250 panzers with infantry moving in its wake halted them in their tracks. Throughout the day, Central Front and the Ninth Army were locked in perpetual struggle.

The German offensive rolled on, with Model aiming for the village of Olkhovka as a prime strategic objective. This high ground provided control over the eastern, southern and western section of his field of operations. The Soviets had already identified this region as strategically vital, and in the weeks running up to Citadel's launch, had transformed it into one of the strongest sections of the defensive belt. The German Panzerkeil, with the Tigers to the fore, thrust ahead, and by noon on 6 July the Germans had no fewer than 1,000 tanks committed to a six-mile front between the villages of Soborovka and Ponyri.

The Russian defences again proved too strong. Time and time again, Model's Panzer Corps ran into trouble. Unperturbed, he tried again on 7 and 8 July, redeploying huge swathes of aircraft in a bid to penetrate the Soviet resistance. The Soviets were just too well dug in, however, and the German attack ground to a halt once more. “The wrack of shattered panzers marking Ninth Army's advance,” writes Healey, bear “mute testament to fact that the momentum of Model's offensive was already beginning to decay.”

Meanwhile, along the southern stretch of the Kursk salient, the second day of Citadel's operations looked promising for the Germans. The elite section of Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army, II SS Panzer Corps, had already bitten into the first line of Soviet defence and looked set to devour the second line on the morning of 6 July.

General Vatutin, commanding the Voronezh Front, suggested an immediate counterattack, but was swiftly deflected by a senior officer who highlighted the destruction caused by the Tigers' and Panthers' large turret guns with their far superior range. Digging in their T-34s and preparing a wall of defensive fire would serve them better, he argued.

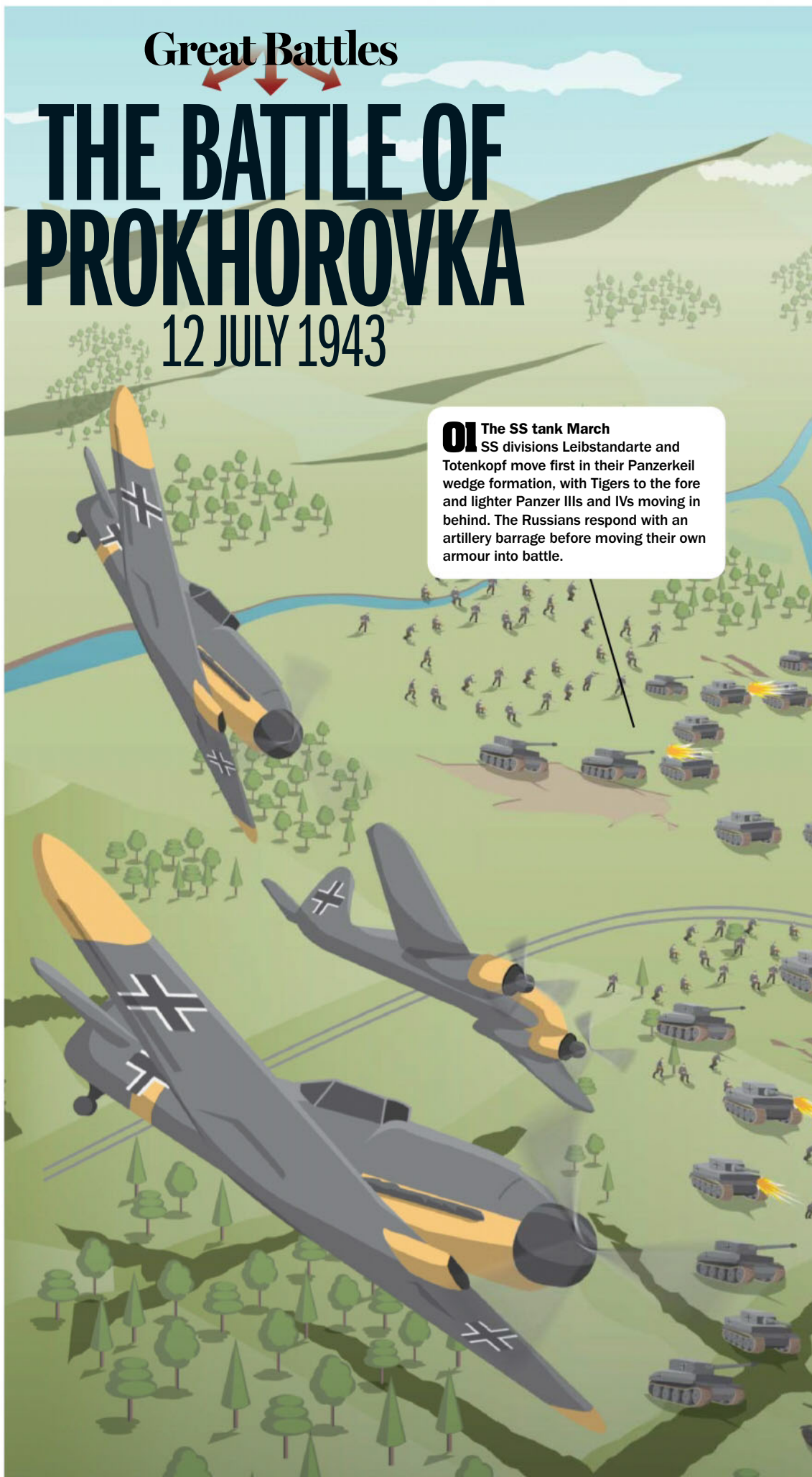
“THE SOVIET DEFENCES AGAIN PROVED TOO STRONG. TIME AND TIME AGAIN, MODEL'S PANZER CORPS RAN INTO TROUBLE”

Great Battles

THE BATTLE OF PROKHOROVKA

12 JULY 1943

01 The SS tank March
SS divisions Leibstandarte and Totenkopf move first in their Panzerkeil wedge formation, with Tigers to the fore and lighter Panzer IIIs and IVs moving in behind. The Russians respond with an artillery barrage before moving their own armour into battle.



03 The iron fists clash

Both Leibstandarte and Totenkopf are drawn into close-quarters combat, and confusion reigns. Individual tank battles are the order of the day and hundreds of tanks are disabled by direct hits to the weaker side armour. It is said that some burning T-34s ram their German adversaries.

04 Soviet flank attacks

Several corps from the Fifth Guards Army engage Totenkopf's left flank. Though seen as a tank battle, infantry units fight ferociously at Prokhorovka, with Russian anti-tank rifles in particular used to maximum effect. Preventing Totenkopf from commanding the position north of Prokhorovka is vital to halting the German advance.

02 The Soviet armour engages

The Soviet Fifth Guards Tank Army moves out to counter the German advance as quickly as possible, bidding to get into close combat and therefore minimise the efficacy of the Germans' longer-range guns. The Luftwaffe continues its support, outfighting the Soviets in the air.

05 The southern edge

South of Prokhorovka, a tough corps from the Fifth Guards Tank Army engages the SS Das Reich division, forcing the Germans to adopt a mostly defensive position on the right flank. The Soviets are keen to ensure that potential support arriving in the form of the approaching III Panzer Corps does not reach the field.



Still, with help from the Luftwaffe, the German armour rammed through the Russian defence and by the end of 6 July, the SS Panzer Corps was wreaking havoc amid the second Soviet defensive line. The following day was cold and the two sides fought in the descending mist, with the Germans pushing steadily on towards the small town of Oboyan, which defended Kursk from the south.

Early in the morning on 7 July, 400 panzers supported by armoured infantry and airpower crashed onto the First Tank Army of the Voronezh Front, which wavered under the onslaught. By 10 July, members of Hoth's XLVIII Panzer Corps seized Hill 244.8, which stood as the most northerly point taken by the Germans in their bid to reach Kursk. SS Panzer Corps, meanwhile, fought a path through the Soviet defensive line

“THE GREAT BATTLE OF PROKHOROVKA BEGAN BENEATH LEADEN SKIES, WARM AND HUMID, WHICH UNLEASHED RAIN AND PEELS OF THUNDER AS THE DAY WORE ON”

and regrouped to direct a major assault against Prokhorovka, which, if successful, looked set to smash Soviet resistance in the south.

Back on the northern face of the salient, Model continued his bid to take the village of Ponyri and fierce hand-to-hand fighting erupted, earning Ponyri the name of ‘Stalingrad of the Kursk’. The two sides fought to a bitter standstill. On the night of 10 July, Model committed his last reserves to the fray, and although by 12 July his divisions held most of the village, the Russian defence was too robust and the Ninth Army couldn’t effect a full breakthrough. When the Germans received intelligence suggesting a major Soviet offensive was set to launch against the Orel bulge, Army Group Centre pulled sections of the Ninth Army away from the action and Model’s attack halted.

Come the night of 11 July, and although the Germans were eroding the Soviet position in the south, Stalin and his generals couldn’t fail to feel confident. Model’s position, hemmed in at Ponyri, left them free to move their armoured reserve, the Fifth Guards Tank Army of the Steppe Front, against Hoth’s divisions in the salient’s southern section.

With Stalin realising that a final battle was set to unfold, the Fifth Guards Tank Army was placed under the command of General Vatutin on the Voronezh Front, a move that led to what is widely regarded as Kursk’s defining moment, the mighty tank battle at Prokhorovka.

Above: Soviet artillery took a heavy toll on German armour at Kursk

“All the elements of myth were at hand,” Showalter says of this imminent clash of armour. “Prokhorovka offered a head-on, stand-up grapple between the elite troops of the world’s best armies on a three-mile front under conditions that left no room for fancy manoeuvres or for air and artillery to make much difference.”

The German II SS Panzer Corps, incorporating the panzer grenadier divisions ‘Leibstandarte’, ‘Das Reich’ and ‘Totenkopf’, was pitted against the Fifth Guards Tank Army. These elite troops met as both went on the attack, “an encounter battle in the literal sense, suggesting predators in rut.” Other Soviet units also took to the field, including divisions of the Fifth Guards Army, as well as sections of the First Tank Army and Sixth Guards Army.

Colonel-General Hoth of the German Fourth Panzer Army, his armour having penetrated the Russian defensive line, was keen to push on before “a defensive scab could form over the thin membrane exposed in the remaining Russian defences,” as Clark writes,

At the same time, divisions from the III Panzer Corps, part of Army Detachment Kempf, were moving northward to join II SS Panzer Corps, provoking the Soviets to engage Hoth’s forces post-haste. Aware that the German Tigers and

Panthers had a longer range than their T-34s, the Soviets bid to move into close combat.

They grossly overestimated the quality of German tanks on this battlefield, according to Kursk historian Lloyd Clark, who claims that the Germans fielded no Panthers or Ferdinands at Prokhorovka, and that II SS Panzer Corps had just 15 Tigers – ten with Totenkopf, four with Leibstandarte and just a solitary giant with Das Reich. Other historians disagree.

Whatever the truth, Leibstandarte, Das Reich and Totenkopf moved in to attack and the great Battle of Prokhorovka began beneath leaden skies, warm and humid, which unleashed rain and peels of thunder as the day wore on. The Germans fielded approximately 600 tanks and assault guns, the Russians 900 (though only about a third of these were T-34s). Hostilities erupted early on 12 July and the inferno blazed all day. The Luftwaffe flew sorties overhead, and the Germans maintained air superiority throughout the battle, though this counted for little in the end.

SS divisions Leibstandarte and Totenkopf moved first in wedge formation, their Tigers in the vanguard, stopping to unload their mighty 88mm shells before moving onward. At about 0830, the Soviet lines unleashed a 15-minute artillery barrage before the Fifth Guards Tank

“BEFORE LONG, SCORES OF TANKS WERE CHURNING UP THE BATTLEFIELD IN INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENTS”

Army rolled towards the tide of panzers, bidding to get into close-quarters combat.

Before long, scores of tanks were churning up the battlefield in individual engagements. Up close, the tanks' thinner side armour was more easily penetrated. Thick smoke from the blazing hulls drifted across the battlefield, making gunnery all the more troublesome. The SS Panzer Corps maintained the pressure throughout the day and the Germans tried desperately to bring III Panzer Corps from Army Detachment Kempf into play. If these machines could enter the battle, it may well have turned the advantage firmly in the Germans' favour. III Panzer, however, couldn't break through in time and the SS had to fight for Prokhorovka with no further ground support.

Historians talk of a last surge by Leibstandarte and Das Reich aimed at breaking the Soviet lines on the battlefield's western

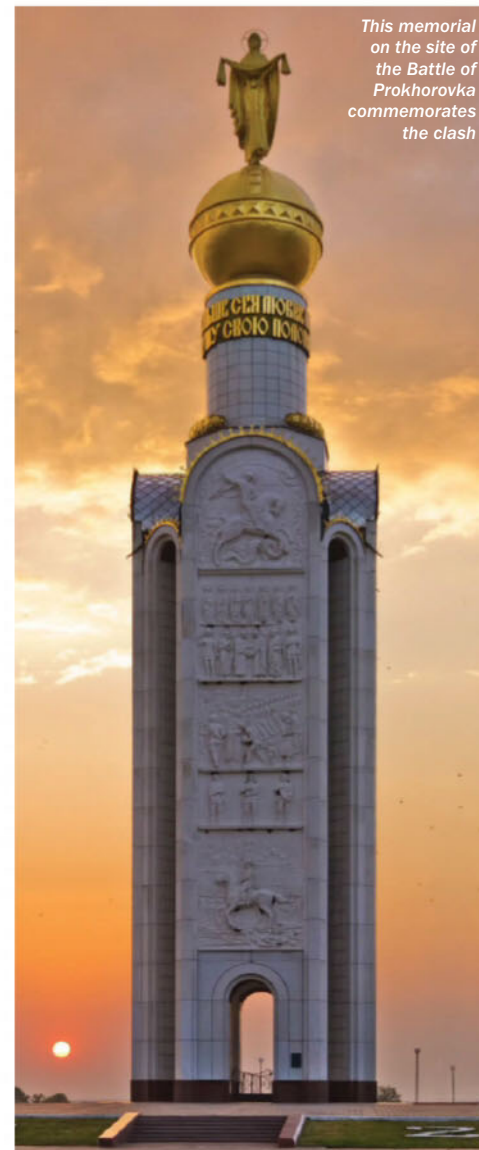
edge, but Fifth Guards Tank Army's Lieutenant-General Rotmistrov engaged his final reserves and the tanks clashed head-on once more, darkening the sky with smoke and dust. The fierce fighting continued well into the night but the Soviets had done their job – they had stopped the German advance.

It is estimated that more than half of the Fifth Guards Tank Army's machines were destroyed. “The Waffen SS won a tactical victory on 12 July,” writes Showalter. “Prokhorovka was not a Tiger graveyard but a T-34 junkyard. Operationally, however, the palm rests with the Red Army.” Prokhorovka bled the German military machine dry. About 300 panzers lay abandoned on the battlefield, and though some may have been salvaged, the field remained in Soviet hands.

Between 13-15 July, SS Panzer Corps continued to make sorties against the Russian defences but in reality it was all over. Hitler called off Operation Citadel on 13 July as the Russians launched a massive offensive, Operation Kutuzov, aimed at Army Group Centre along the Orel salient. The Battle of Kursk ceded the initiative to the Red Army, which then rolled on towards Berlin. For Hitler and the Wehrmacht, defeat was edging ever closer.



Soviet soldiers fire on Germans during the Battle of Kursk



This memorial on the site of the Battle of Prokhorovka commemorates the clash

Images: Alamy, Ed Crooks, Rex Features

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Heroes of the Victoria Cross

WILLIE APIATA

When this New Zealand soldier carried his injured comrade through 70 metres of enemy fire, he became an overnight national hero

WORDS FRANCES WHITE

Willie Apiata's youth was anything but stable. Born in Mangakino in the North Island of New Zealand to a Maori father and Pakeha mother, he was the youngest of four siblings with three older sisters. However, when he was an infant, his parents separated, and he saw little of his father. He spent most of his early days in Northland, but when Apiata was seven, the family moved to Te Kaha in Eastland.

He attended Te Whanau-a-Apanui school, but found it difficult to focus on his studies, instead feeling the draw of the army. In 1989, at the age of 15, the young Apiata left school and enlisted in the New Zealand Army as a territorial soldier. He began a career that was fated to become legendary.

While serving as a territorial soldier, Apiata attempted to fulfil his dream of joining the SAS, but he was not immediately successful. Undeterred, he applied for the SAS again in 2001 and began training in 2002. In 2004, just a year after he had become a father, he was posted to Afghanistan as part of an SAS patrol. It was here that he would face a situation in the field that would change his life forever.

Night had fallen and the Kiwi troops had set up a defensive formation, while many attempted to get some rest. They were positioned in a rocky, rural area with plenty of places for men to hide. Unfortunately for them, this was exactly what the enemy was doing. Suddenly, and without warning, the troops were attacked. About 20 enemy combatants emerged from the darkness and grenades rained down on the unsuspecting SAS troops. The initial attack was aimed at one of the unit's vehicles, and unluckily for Apiata, this was where he was sleeping.

While Apiata slept soundly on the bonnet of the truck, a grenade landed nearby. As it exploded, he was blown off the bonnet with the impact. Confused, Apiata picked himself off the ground and attempted to see through the rising plumes of smoke.

Miraculously, he was uninjured, but not everyone had been so lucky. Two other soldiers had been hit by shrapnel, and one of them, known only as Corporal D, was seriously wounded. Two soldiers were attempting to apply first aid to the struggling man, but it was useless – Corporal D's injuries were life-threatening, and he was bleeding out fast.

Apiata surveyed the situation: with enemy fire becoming increasingly intense and the SAS men kneeling over Corporal D's body in a

very exposed position, it was only a matter of time before enemy bullets found their targets. The grenade had destroyed one of their two vehicles, which was smouldering and pumping out thick black smoke, and the other was immobilised. There was no way they would be able to load Corporal D into it to make an escape. The wounded soldier was deteriorating before Apiata's eyes; he couldn't wait – he needed medical help and he needed it now. With the machine-gun fire becoming ever more intense, the soldiers attempted to take cover, but Apiata had other plans.

Grasping his wounded comrade and lifting him up, Apiata carried the bleeding soldier in his arms and began to walk back towards the rest of his team, who had taken up defensive positions. The machine-gun fire was relentless, and grenades continued to rain down as he moved through the rocky terrain. Apiata walked 70 metres through exposed ground and enemy fire to where the rest of their troops were stationed. Those waiting to receive them watched in horror as Apiata's form was lit up from the light of the blazing vehicle and the constant firing of weapons. Miraculously, Apiata and Corporal D made it through without being hit a single time. "Nothing hit me," Apiata later commented. "I can't explain why I didn't get hit when we were crossing that hill through the fire. It's a miracle we made it." Now with Corporal D able to receive proper medical attention, Apiata immediately returned to the fight.

To Apiata, it was a small act. A spur of the moment decision to help his comrade, but his actions had saved a life. Corporal D had



Left: The mountainous terrain of Afghanistan made enemy combatants difficult to spot

“Corporal Apiata carried a severely wounded fellow soldier across open ground while coming under intense attack. He did this despite the extreme danger to himself”

New Zealand Prime Minister
Helen Clark

Apiata at a 2008 service to honour past and present VC heroes

“His courageous actions, with total disregard for his own safety, saved the life of his comrade and should be saluted by all New Zealanders”

RSA President John Campbell

been suffering from arterial bleeding, and later medical evaluation revealed that he would have likely died from blood loss had Apiata’s bravery not ensured he received timely medical attention. After recovering from his injuries, Corporal D returned to active duty.

Once reports of what Apiata had done began to flood in, the New Zealand Defence Force headquarters decided to push for the highest military honour. By this point, Apiata’s first NZSAS deployment to Afghanistan had ended, and he was getting on with his ordinary life.

Although he was honoured at receiving the Victoria Cross, publicity-shy Apiata never fully embraced the celebrity status it brought him. When it was announced in 2007 that he was to become one of the very few living holders of the medal, he almost rejected it. Apiata was no glory hunter, he was a mild, no-nonsense soldier who didn’t see his actions as anything heroic, and he feared the publicity that would come his way with such an honour. His comrades in the unit later commented: “Willie didn’t want the medal.” In fact Apiata was so against it that he seriously considered resigning rather than be the subject of such attention while still serving in the NZSAS.

It took strong words from his commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Jim Blackwell to prevent Apiata from walking. Apiata feared that his face becoming recognisable would negatively impact his career, or even the work of the NZSAS, but Blackwell reasoned that publicity would actually help boost the reputation of the unit. Not only would it attract new recruits, which they were severely

lacking, but would also hopefully encourage the government to give them more money and equipment. Listening carefully to his words, Apiata finally agreed.

The publicity surrounding Apiata was huge. The soldier was hastily groomed for the media and coached in perfect interview techniques. However, he refused to acknowledge what he did as anything but ordinary. “I was only doing my job and looking after my mates,” Apiata told a media conference in Wellington. When asked if he regarded himself as a role model, he replied: “I see myself as Willie Apiata. I’m just an ordinary person.” Soon, a television reconstruction of the events was produced, a history of the NZSAS was released, and a Willie Apiata biography appropriately titled *Reluctant Hero* was written. Now one of the most recognisable faces in New Zealand, Apiata went on a celebratory tour around the country.

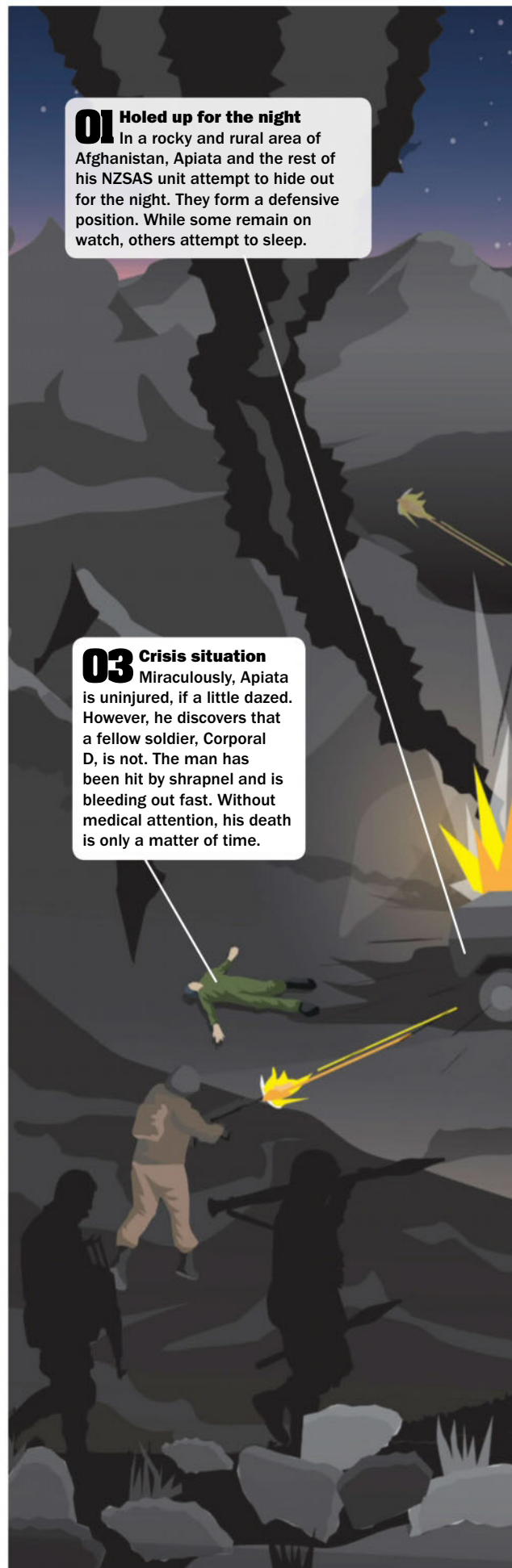
Although the media buzz surrounding him was still high, Apiata was keen to return to work; it was all he had wanted to do the whole time. Unaccustomed to the spotlight, Apiata returned to the field to continue serving in the NZSAS. Although he was grateful to receive the Victoria Cross, commenting that “it means a lot to me, to my family and the unit itself,” in April 2008 he donated the medal to the NZSAS trust. In July 2012, Apiata left full-time military service to teach young people adventure skills, however, he remains with the NZSAS Reserve forces. Although the attention is something he continues to believe he doesn’t deserve, he remains a national hero and inspiration to young New Zealanders.



In 2014, Apiata met Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace

01 Holed up for the night
In a rocky and rural area of Afghanistan, Apiata and the rest of his NZSAS unit attempt to hide out for the night. They form a defensive position. While some remain on watch, others attempt to sleep.

03 Crisis situation
Miraculously, Apiata is uninjured, if a little dazed. However, he discovers that a fellow soldier, Corporal D, is not. The man has been hit by shrapnel and is bleeding out fast. Without medical attention, his death is only a matter of time.



04 The long walk

Apiata picks Corporal D up in his arms and begins to walk 70 metres to the rear, where the rest of the unit is stationed. As he hurries to get medical attention for Corporal D, the enemy assault is relentless; bullets and grenades fly all around him.

05 Finish the job

Amazingly, neither Apiata or Corporal D are hit during the 70-metre journey. Apiata manages to hand Corporal D over to receive urgent medical care. His task complete, Apiata grasps his weapon and returns to the fight.

02 The enemy attacks

Suddenly, about 20 enemy soldiers attack the New Zealand force. They launch grenades towards the unit's exposed position, concentrating on the exposed vehicle that Apiata is sleeping on. As the grenade explodes, he is blown off the bonnet.

The Iran-Iraq War

Although this devastating conflict was the longest conventional war of the 20th century, its roots and repercussions are still very much misunderstood

WORDS TALLHA ABDULRAZAQ

With all the chaos and destruction currently engulfing Iraq, Syria and the wider Middle East, few would believe that the root cause was actually a war that started in 1980. While the Iran-Iraq War ended decades ago, in 1988, its effects have reverberated to the present day, with modern Iranian hegemonic ambitions having their origins in the fundamentalist Shia ideology of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Having overthrown the Iranian monarch in 1979, the cleric Khomeini was bent on war with secular Iraq. Iranian millennialism and a fatalistic belief in a preordained divine mission heavily influenced Shia political groups and militias in the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Arguably, they also helped create the reactionary extremists that we now know as the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It's possible that without the sectarian policies inspired and instigated by Iran in Iraq and increasingly Syria, ISIS would have not found such a bountiful recruiting ground in the persecuted people of the region, fearing a sectarian Shia takeover.

Although the Iran-Iraq War cast an enormous shadow, it has become obscure in the Western collective conscience, its causes shrouded in mystery and usually open to misunderstanding. A multitude of factors led to the outbreak of the conflagration of the war, which pitted secular Iraq, and the Sunni Saddam Hussein, against revolutionary Iran. To understand it we must look at the historical context of the war, as well as its unique set of 'casus belli', and dispel some of the most persistent myths surrounding the outbreak of hostilities.

The ethno-sectarian myth

From a historical perspective, it is inaccurate to claim that the Iran-Iraq War has its roots in any kind of ancient Arab-Persian racial animosity, or even in any long-standing Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict. Arabs and Persians have lived together, married and influenced one another since the 7th century. Even with the theological and political schism separating Sunnis and Shias, Islamic society has been race-blind in theory and, by and large, in practice for centuries, until the advent of nationalism in the 19th century. The Arab Abbasid Empire was heavily influenced by Persian aristocratic families and culture, and they even adopted Persian practices in the court of the Caliph. Moreover, several of the most celebrated writers of Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic philosophy, theology and jurisprudence in Sunni Islam were ethnic Persians.

Viewing the various Ottoman Turkish and Safavid Persian wars as a precursor to the Iran-Iraq War serves only to distort the very modern, very immediate points of contention that both republican Iraq and Iran faced. As Iraq was the Ottoman Empire's easternmost territory, some observers essentially argued that Ba'athist Iraq was to some extent analogous to the Ottomans, while Khomeini's Iran represented the Safavids. The modern Ottoman Sunnis (Iraq) battling the Safavid Shias (Iran) makes for a compelling story, but it remains just that – a misconstrued fiction. Even the causes behind the Ottoman-Safavid wars cannot be said to be the roots of the Iran-Iraq War, because these two empires fought over a variety of reasons, including territory, access to resources and in retaliation to interference in each other's affairs.



IRAN AND IRAQ'S COLLISION COURSE

1913

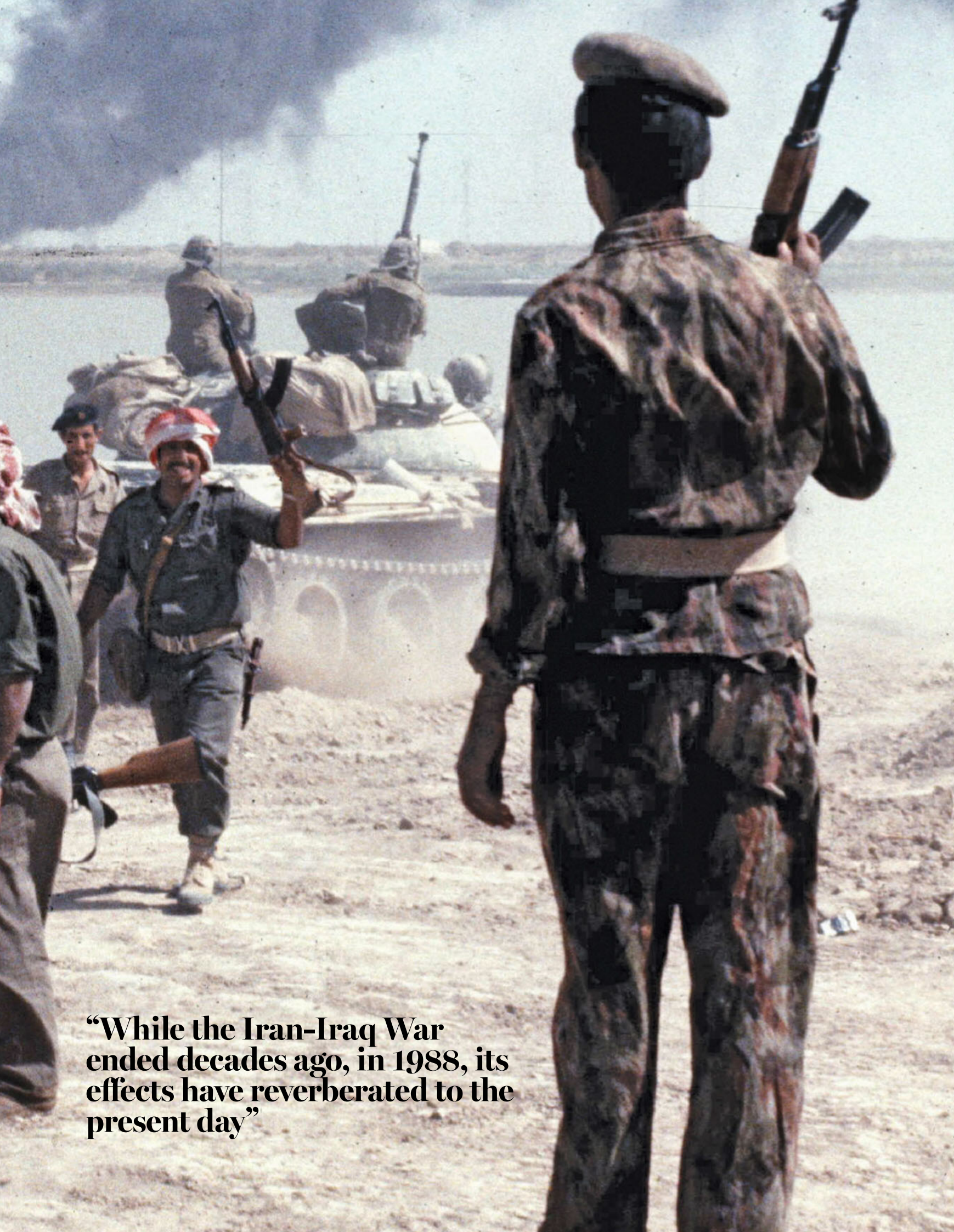
The Constantinople Protocol is signed between the Ottomans, Persian Qajars, and the British and Russian empires to delineate the Shatt al-Arab waterway as part of the Ottoman-Persian border.

1918

The Ottoman Turks lose World War I, ceding their territories in Iraq to the British Empire, which eventually becomes a British League of Nations Mandate.

1921

The Kingdom of Iraq is created under British tutelage, with Faisal bin Hussein crowned as its first monarch. King Faisal is directly under British control, with very little real power.



“While the Iran-Iraq War ended decades ago, in 1988, its effects have reverberated to the present day”

These causes are quite common among human conflict throughout history, and so irrelevant to the direct causes behind the Iran-Iraq War. Just because Iraq and Iran share parts of the same geography between these two old competing empires, that does not mean these identities were necessarily transposed onto the new nation states, or that they must somehow be intrinsically linked to contemporary conflicts. The real roots of this war start after the creation of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1921, and the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran in 1925.

Border disputes and the Shatt al-Arab waterway

After the post-World War I status quo was settled in the Middle East, largely in imperial Britain's favour, the British carried over a number of treaties that existed prior to the creation of Iraq as an, at least nominally, independent monarchy. This mainly consisted of the 1913 Constantinople Protocol, which stipulated that the southern boundary between Ottoman Iraq and Iran would mainly run along the east bank of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The decision to keep the border mostly on the eastern bank of the Shatt was in line with the centuries-old border between the Ottomans and Persians established since the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639.

Unlike the rest of the Arab world, whose unnatural borders were carved from the carcass of the Ottoman Empire by European powers, the Iraqi-Iranian border ran mostly along natural boundaries of mountains, marshes and waterways. This arrangement between the two neighbouring monarchies continued, with minor treaties amending the borders in 1937, until the 1958 Iraqi Revolution overthrew the monarchy and brought about the creation of the Republic of Iraq.

The new Iraqi leader, Abd al-Karim Qasim, had communist leanings and wanted to move Iraq away from Western influence. Although Qasim was overthrown in 1963, successive Iraqi regimes also had the same ambition of striking out on their own rather than being under the control of Western powers. This desire was almost immediately challenged by an American-backed Shah Mohammed Pahlavi, the nominal king of Iran, who made new claims for access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway.

Even just a casual glance at a map of the region is enough to explain why the Shatt was and is so vital to Iraq's interests. It flows from the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the two most prominent features of Iraq's geography that give the country its nickname of 'Bilad Ar-rafidayn', or Land of Two Rivers. It is perhaps the main reason why civilisation has flourished in Mesopotamia for thousands of years. In terms of modern Iraq's

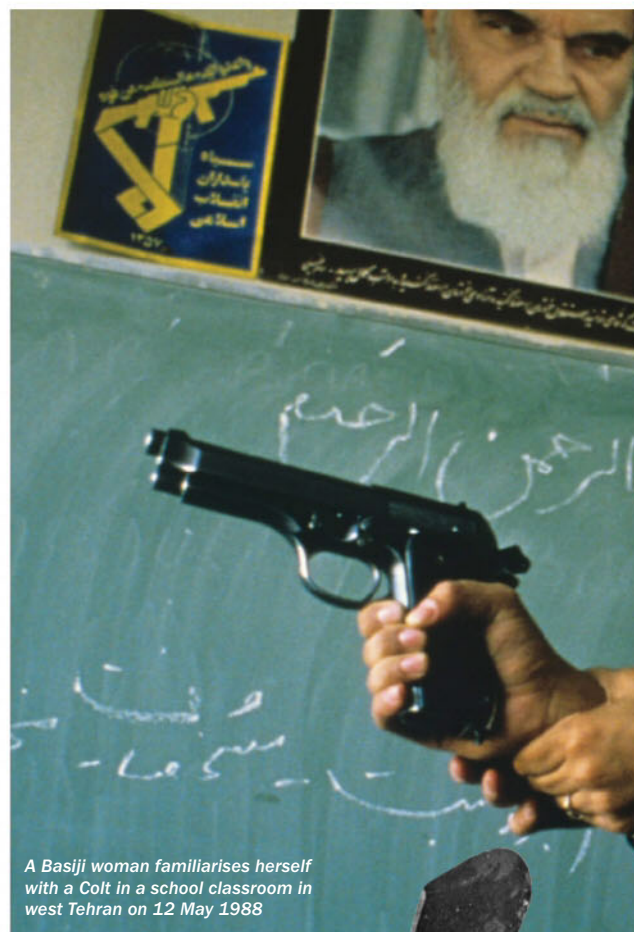
“A casual glance at a map of the region is enough to explain why the Shatt was and is so vital to Iraq's interests”

geography, not only has the Shatt always been critical to its oil export, it is also crucially part of Iraq's minuscule access to the Arabian Gulf.

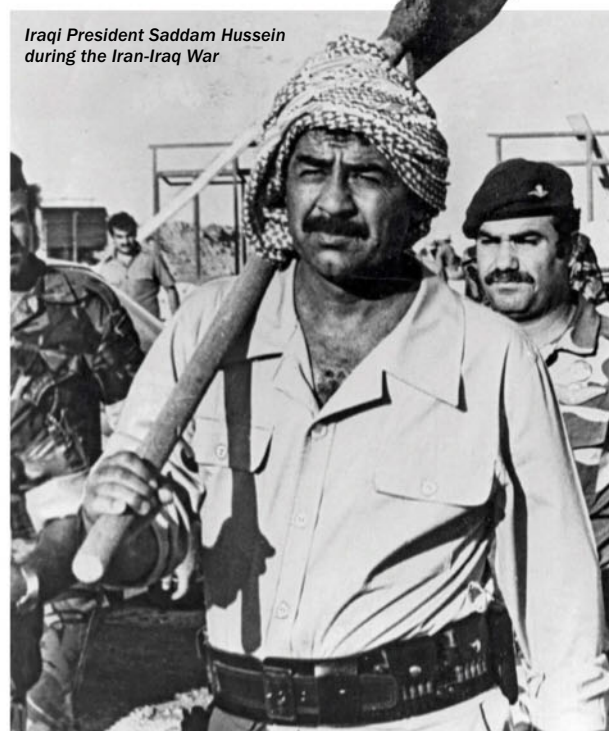
While Iraq has only 58 kilometres of coastline, Iran has an enormous 2,440 kilometres, which is mostly focused along the Arabian Gulf. As such, and in light of the Arabian Gulf being one of the world's major lifelines for oil, successive Iraqi governments have been sensitive to any attempt to reduce its already limited, and highly vulnerable, access to this geo-strategic waterway. Iraq's four main ports, only one of which is a deep-water port, are located in Basra and Umm Qasr, placing them within easy striking distance of the international border with Iran, and so constantly under threat. Any change in the delineation of the borders in Iran's favour would negatively impact Iraqi security.

Iraq's leaders refused to acknowledge the shah's claims on the waterway, arguing that the previously agreed treaties were still in force. This did not deter the shah, who was receiving massive quantities of arms and military support from the United States. Iraq, on the other hand, lacked superpower support and was wracked by incessant coups and counter-coups, creating domestic instability that made it hard to project any kind of deterrent power against external threats. This climate eventually led to the rise of the infamous Ba'ath Party in 1968, and the ascendancy of Saddam Hussein to positions of power and influence.

The Ba'athists had to contend with the perennial problem of yet another Kurdish rebellion in 1969. This fire was actively stoked by the shah, who not only armed, funded and militarily aided the Kurdish rebels, but also unilaterally abrogated previous treaties regarding the Shatt and started sailing his vessels up and down the waterway with impunity. The shah's efforts bore fruit, with Iraqi military losses in fighting against the Kurds in 1974-75 alone reaching 17,000 men (7,000 killed, 10,000 wounded) and civilian casualties totalling about 40,000. This forced the outmatched Ba'athists to relent and begin direct negotiations with the shah. The talks led



A Basiji woman familiarises herself with a Colt in a school classroom in west Tehran on 12 May 1988



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War



1925

Reza Khan, an Iranian officer, overthrows the Qajar monarchy with British help and becomes the first shah of the short-lived Pahlavi dynasty.

1941

Reza Khan is forced to abdicate by British and Russian forces in favour of his son, Mohamed, who becomes the second and last Pahlavi shah of Iran.

1958

The Iraqi military led by Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrows the Iraqi monarchy, slaughters the royal family, and declares the creation of the Republic of Iraq.



1958

The shah renews Iranian claims to sovereignty over the Shatt, angering Iraq's new rulers, who are powerless to prevent him from moving his vessels through the waterway.

Right: An Iranian Revolutionary Guard (left) and cleric armed with German-made G3 automatic assault rifles



to the Algiers Accords in 1975, where the shah got everything he wanted, with the entirety of the Shatt al-Arab now split between Iraq and Iran. In return, the shah agreed to stop supporting the Kurds, who were then swiftly crushed once their benefactor had abandoned them.

The Algiers Accords and the resulting treaties with Iran were viewed both internally and externally as an Iraqi capitulation. Not only did Iraq lack the military power and diplomatic clout to protect its interests, but it was forced to split one of its main economic and strategic arteries in two with an enemy who had given up nothing short of a few villages on the frontier and a promise not to further foment and encourage a Kurdish insurrection. Nonetheless, Iraq was compelled to yield to the shah's desires, and a regional status quo was quickly established with Iran as the clear dominant power.

A clash for hegemony

The shah may have dominated the arena against Iraq, but four years after his success, he was toppled by Khomeini's Iranian Revolution. Khomeini swiftly began to dismantle anything remotely resembling an institution loyal to the shah, and this led to the purge of 50 per cent of Iranian experienced, field-grade officers.

In order to focus the whirling maelstrom of revolutionary fervour, Khomeini directed the people's energies towards foes, both internal and external. Iraq was seen as the ideal enemy, as it had a sizeable Shia population and, as Khomeini was a senior Shia cleric, he intended to use the Shia faithful to overthrow Saddam and export his revolution into the Arab and Islamic heartlands by using Iraq as a conduit.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing and often ignored facets of this war is that it could have been entirely avoided, and attempts were even made by the Iraqis to continue the status quo established in 1975. Abol Hasan Banisadr, Iran's former revolutionary president, confirmed that Saddam had congratulated Khomeini on overthrowing the shah, and had made an offer of friendship that was rebuffed. This suggests that peace with Iraq was always an option for Khomeini to take, and that Iraq was not in a particularly bellicose mood from the very outset of the revolution.

During his years of opposition to the shah, Khomeini actually sought shelter in Iraq for more than a decade until 1978. This was all under the eye of a Ba'athist government that has been much maligned as being an exclusive sectarian, Sunni and Arab regime.



An Iranian Revolutionary Guard weeps by the body of his brother in the early days of the Iran-Iraq War, 16 October 1980



1963

The Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party of Iraq successfully overthrows Abd al-Karim Qasim in February, but are themselves ousted from power by Abd ul-Salam Arif in November of the same year.



1964

Ayatollah Khomeini's radical Shia revolutionary ideology is deemed a significant threat by the shah, who has him exiled to Turkey. Shortly after, Khomeini moves to Najaf in Iraq.

1968

The Ba'athists stage a comeback and overthrow the Iraqi government, ushering in an era of Ba'athist rule lasting until 2003. Saddam Hussein becomes a driving force in Iraqi politics.

1969

Mullah Mustafa Barzani restarts a Kurdish separatist rebellion in Iraq after Baghdad tries to make peace deals with other Kurdish leaders. His rebellion is greatly aided by the shah.

1975

After years of fighting, the Iraqis cannot quell the Kurdish rebels and sue for peace with the shah. The Algiers Accords are signed, relinquishing half of the Shatt to Iran.

After Khomeini rejected cordial relations with Iraq, its internal situation began to deteriorate. Revolutionary Shia fundamentalist groups such as the Da'wa Party (or the Islamic Call Party) heeded the ayatollah's demand to overthrow the infidel Ba'athists. Although the general Shia population in Iraq was more amenable to at least living with, if not necessarily supporting, the ruling regime, fringe extremists like the Da'wa Party were a different story. They began receiving arms and funds from the Iranians, and on April Fools' Day in 1980, they attempted to assassinate Tariq Aziz, Saddam's Christian deputy prime minister and close aide. This attempt against the life of a senior Ba'athist led to the execution of the Da'wa Party's spiritual leader, Muhammed Baqir al-Sadr.

After discovering that Khomeini was not amenable to peace, the Ba'athists took measures to smother his revolution while it was still in the cradle. Saddam wanted to not only prevent the Iranians from exporting their revolution, but he also craved leadership of the Arab world in his attempt to take up the mantle left by the first and most influential of the pan-Arab leaders, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.

After Egypt's decline as the most powerful Arab nation standing against Israel, Saddam wanted Iraq to replace it as the leader of the Arab world, with himself leading the fight to take back Palestine from the Zionists. Of course, as Khomeini was also claiming enmity to Israel and was now trying to make his theocratic ideology the dominant force in the region, this meant that, aside from the border disputes and conflicts over internal meddling, the Iraqis and Iranians were now wrestling over ideological as well as regional hegemony. The winner of this contest was believed to become, by the belligerents at least, the creator of the entire region's destiny.

This contest, and Khomeini's provocations, led the Iraqis to begin arming Arab nationalists in the Iranian Khuzistan Province – an area densely populated by Iran's ethnic Arabs. Iraq also attempted to turn the tables on the Iranians by arming and supporting Iranian Kurds. Unfortunately for the Iraqis, their plans to distract revolutionary Iran with its own ethnic conflict did not work in the long term, and the Iranians quickly overcame these rebellions. Perhaps realising that the shah was a far easier neighbour to deal with than Iran's clerics, the Iraqis also hosted several shah-loyalists who led a counter-revolutionary attempt called the 'Nojeh Airbase Plot', which was foiled in July 1980 for reasons unknown to this day.

The final straw that led to Iraq's decision to invade Iran occurred when sporadic fighting erupted on the border. In fact, the Iraqis consider 4 September 1980 as the real start of the conflict, as the Iranians began shelling Iraqi border villages in the central

“It is hardly surprising that the Iran-Iraq War happened, but it is important to note that this conflict reeked of opportunism on both sides”



Iranian tanks gather west of the Khaker River in the Dezful area in southern Iran, 30 March 1982

1978

Khomeini continues to agitate against the shah, who then pressures Iraq to ask him to leave based on the terms of the Algiers Accords. Khomeini then moves to Paris.

January-February 1979

The Iranian Revolution erupts, forcing the shah to flee Iran and heralding the return of Khomeini, who lands in Tehran on 1 February to cheering crowds of revolutionaries.

April 1980

The Iranians back the Da'wa Party's attempt to assassinate Iraq's Christian Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. Saddam responds by rounding up Da'wa conspirators and ideologues, and executing them.



July 1980

The 'Nojeh Airbase Plot' backed by Iraq but led by Iranian monarchists and secularists, is foiled by the Khomeini regime. This leads to further purges of the military.

September 1980

Iran shells Iraqi border towns on 4 September, leading to an Iraqi retaliation that seizes Arab villages promised to them by the Shah in 1975 but never handed over.



An Iranian tanker gun fires, 9 August 1987

plains around Khanaqin and Mendeli. Iraq retaliated by ordering its forces to forcibly take lands promised to it by the shah in the Algiers Accords five years ago. This in turn led to Iranian President Banisadr to call for a general mobilisation of Iranian forces on 20 September. Acutely aware of Khomeini's purges of the Iranian military, Saddam Hussein saw an opportunity to strike a blow against the Iranians while their forces were still in disarray, and to crumple Khomeini's revolution before it had a chance to settle itself. The Iraqi Army finally crossed the Iranian border in force on 22 September 1980, a date most historians name as the start of eight long years of blood and indecisive military operations.

The impact of the Iran-Iraq War

Although there were a number of factors leading to the outbreak of hostilities, from geographic concerns to vitriolic sectarian rhetoric, none of these issues was the principle cause of the war. In fact, this war likely began as a struggle for the Islamic heartland of Arabia, with visions of secular pan-Arabism clashing with religious Shia millennialism. These conflicting ideologies were led by two equally conflicting and grandiose characters, embodied by Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini, who both saw themselves as having a date with destiny.

With leadership of the Middle East at stake, it is hardly surprising that the Iran-Iraq War happened, but it is important to note that this conflict reeked of opportunism on both sides. On the one hand, Khomeini sought to use Iraq's

large Shia population against the Ba'athists, which made them paranoid of an existential threat. On the other hand, Saddam wanted to punish Khomeini's belligerence and to take advantage of the heavily diminished Iranian military – dreams becoming the leader of the Arab world were also likely on his mind.

Although Iraq barely managed to gain victory, one that was almost Pyrrhic in nature, the contemporary situation of the Middle East has undeniably been marked by this war. Iraq managed to contain Iran's ambition to export its revolution within its own borders for 15 years, until the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. This event not only toppled the Ba'athists, but it also destroyed Iraq as a functioning state and shifted the balance of power decidedly in Iran's favour. Since then, Iran has not only managed to successfully export its revolutionary influence into Iraq, as evidenced by the direct involvement of Iranian military units in commanding Iraqi Shia militias, but it has gone further afield into Bahrain, Syria, and now even Yemen by arming and supporting the Houthi rebels who seized power in late 2014.

Arguably, Khomeini's initial aims prior to the Iran-Iraq War have now been realised decades after his death in 1989. Iraq is now not only a conduit for the movement of sectarian Shia militias and Iranian supplies to support the beleaguered Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, but it is also one of Iran's staunchest allies governed by its former ally, the Da'wa Party. Whatever the future holds for the region, one thing is clear: the importance of the Iran-Iraq War can never be overstated.

THE PRICE OF WAR

IRAN

COUNTING THE COST OF THE EIGHT-YEAR STRUGGLE FOR DOMINANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

IRAQ

600,000-1.2 MILLION	WOUNDED	400,000-700,000
450,000-730,000	KILLED	150,000-340,000
45,000	POWS	70,000
\$7 BILLION	ARMS PURCHASES	\$25 BILLION
\$10 BILLION	OIL REVENUES	\$55 BILLION
\$20 BILLION	NON-OIL GDP	\$50 BILLION
\$32 BILLION	MISCELLANEOUS COSTS	\$29 BILLION
\$69 BILLION	TOTAL COSTS	\$159 BILLION

Images: Getty Images, Rex Features

SOPWITH

'Pup' was initially a nickname due to the fighter's small size, but it stuck and later took over from the official 'Scout' title

SOPWITH PUP (N6452)

ROLE: SINGLE-SEAT FIGHTING SCOUT

YEARS IN SERVICE: 1916-17

LENGTH: 5.9M (19FT 3.75IN)

WINGSPAN: 8.1M (26FT 6IN)

MAXIMUM SPEED: 179.4KM/H (111.5MPH)

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE: 5,334M (17,500FT)

ENGINE: 59.65KW (80HP) LE RHONE ROTARY ENGINE

ARMAMENT: VICKERS .303 MACHINE GUN, LEWIS MACHINE GUN (ON SOME MODELS), LE PRIEUR ROCKETS

PUP

Take a tour of the aircraft that brought the fight to the Germans and helped end the terror of the Fokker Scourge

WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS

The Pup was one of Sopwith's most iconic designs



“IT WAS A FIXED-GUN, SINGLE-SEAT FIGHTER AND ENTERED SERVICE IN 1916 TO TAKE THE WAR IN THE SKIES OF FRANCE BACK TO THE GERMANS”



Above: A Pup taking off from the battle cruiser HMS Repulse in the pre-aircraft carrier era

The precursor to the Sopwith Camel and the SE5, the Pup was one of the Royal Flying Corps' (RFC) finest aircraft in the middle stages of World War I. It was not an original design, and its shape stems from its bigger brother the Sopwith 1½ Strutter, but it was instantly effective. The plane was a fixed-gun single-seat fighter and entered service in 1916 to take the war in the skies of France back to the Germans.

1,770 Pups were built in total, and were used extensively on the Western Front as aviation became an important part of warfare for the first time. The plane fast became a favourite among pilots due to its responsive controls and manoeuvrability, but was phased out in late 1917 as German fighters such as the Albatros DIII began to outclass it.

In the latter stages of the war the Pup was handed a new responsibility: protecting

Britain from the threat of Zeppelin raids. Fitted with more-powerful engines, they helped shield the skies from the German Empire's bombing attacks under Operation Türkenkreuz. After the war, Pups acted as training craft for pilots in the newly created RAF. Today they remain an iconic aircraft, and a fond reminder of the nascent period of military aviation. Very few aircraft are remembered with such nostalgia.



The aircraft's wheels were often accompanied by skid undercarriages to aid landing

The cockpit, although basic looking, was more than enough to be effective on the Western Front

COCKPIT

The aircraft's original design was supposedly sketched out in chalk on a Kingston shop floor by test pilot Harry Hawker. Nevertheless, the Pup possessed flying qualities above many of its contemporaries. The control was smooth and the .303 Vickers machine gun was attached to an interrupter gear, so that it could be fired forward through the plane's propeller.

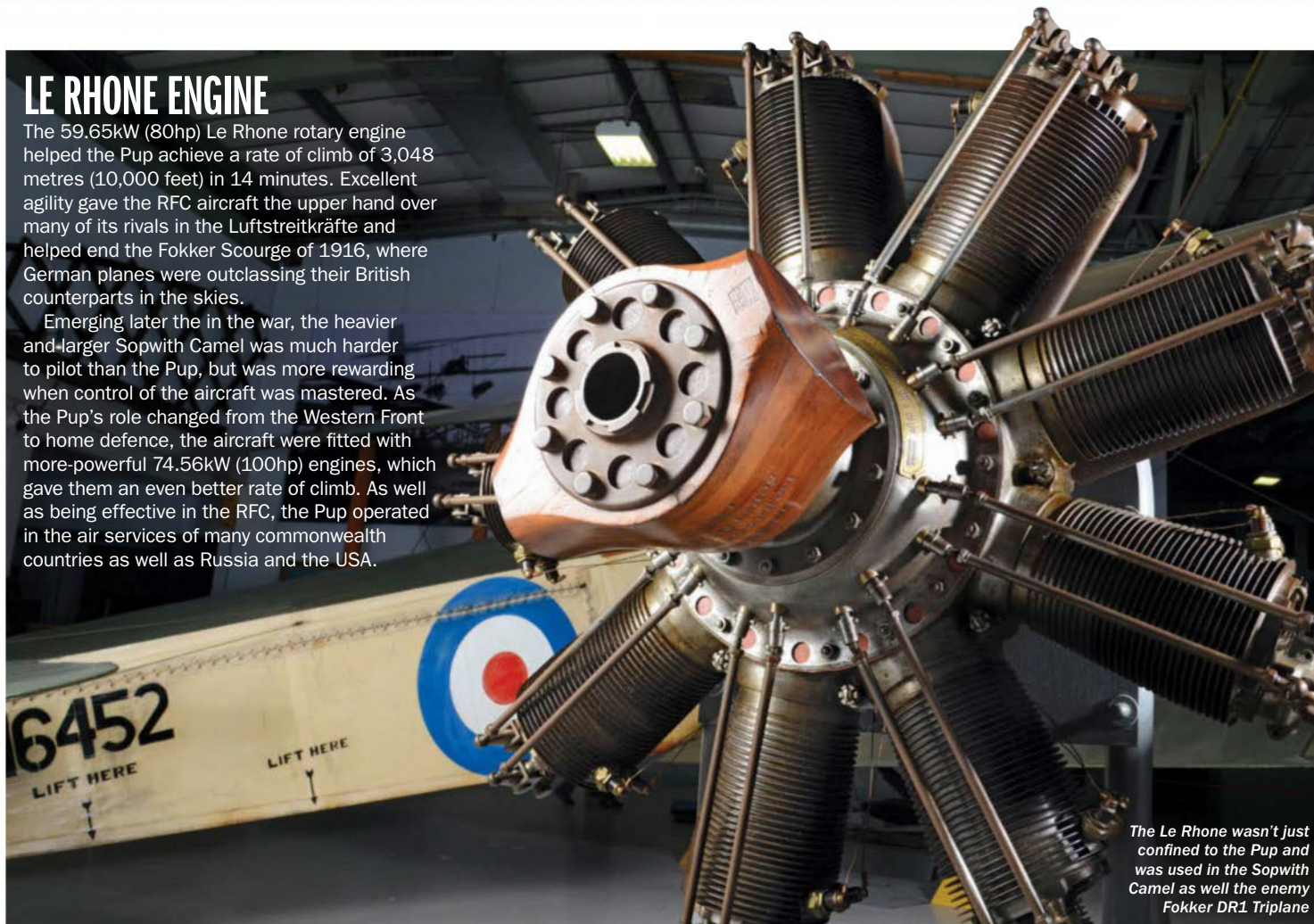
Overheating was a common problem found with Vickers guns, but holes were cut into the water jacket so air could cool the weapon faster. The simple design of the Pup, in its role as a fighter scout, became the template that later Sopwith variations would follow. In the early days of military aviation, new and upgraded prototypes were rolling off the production line at a rapid rate. As such, it wasn't long until the Pup was superseded by more-improved models that were poised to take to the skies over France.

"IN THE EARLY DAYS OF MILITARY AVIATION, NEW AND UPGRADED PROTOTYPES WERE ROLLING OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE AT A RAPID RATE"

LE RHONE ENGINE

The 59.65kW (80hp) Le Rhone rotary engine helped the Pup achieve a rate of climb of 3,048 metres (10,000 feet) in 14 minutes. Excellent agility gave the RFC aircraft the upper hand over many of its rivals in the Luftstreitkräfte and helped end the Fokker Scourge of 1916, where German planes were outclassing their British counterparts in the skies.

Emerging later in the war, the heavier and larger Sopwith Camel was much harder to pilot than the Pup, but was more rewarding when control of the aircraft was mastered. As the Pup's role changed from the Western Front to home defence, the aircraft were fitted with more-powerful 74.56kW (100hp) engines, which gave them an even better rate of climb. As well as being effective in the RFC, the Pup operated in the air services of many commonwealth countries as well as Russia and the USA.



The Le Rhone wasn't just confined to the Pup and was used in the Sopwith Camel as well as the enemy Fokker DR1 Triplane

THE PRE-AIRCRAFT CARRIER AGE

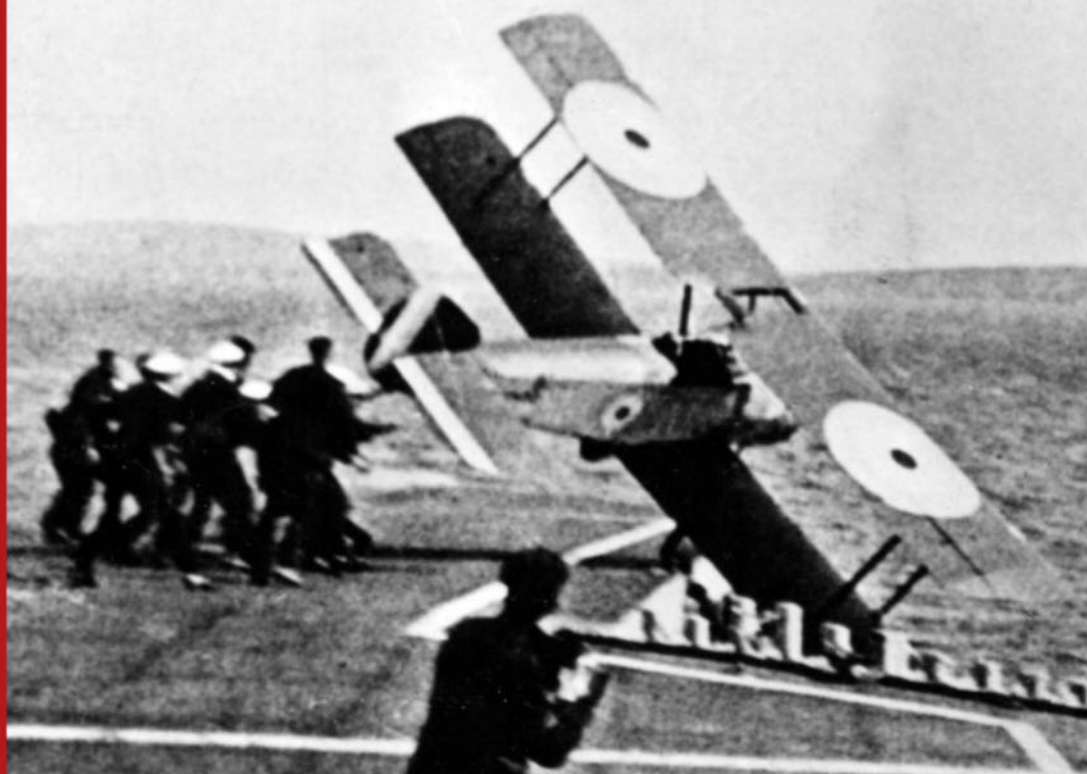
HOW THE PUP BECAME THE FIRST PLANE TO LAND ON A MOVING SHIP

As well as proving itself on the Western Front, the Sopwith Pup shot to fame with its excellent ability to land. Fitted with skid undercarriages, the fighter was designed to catch the traps set up on the decks of ships. On 2 August 1917, it became the first aircraft to achieve the feat when Lieutenant Commander Edwin Dunning successfully landed on the flying deck of battle cruiser HMS Furious.

Dunning was successful in landing at sea once again on 7 August, but he was not to be so lucky on his third attempt. As he approached the Furious, the engine choked and the lieutenant commander tried to pull out. However, it was too late, and the heavy landing burst a tyre as an updraft threw the plane overboard. Dunning was thrown about in the cockpit and knocked unconscious. He drowned in the sinking aircraft.

Right: Dunning's untimely death was shocking, but he had shown that landings could be made at sea, changing the face of aviation

“FITTED WITH SKID UNDERCARRIAGES, THE FIGHTER WAS DESIGNED TO CATCH THE TRAPS SET UP ON THE DECKS OF SHIPS”

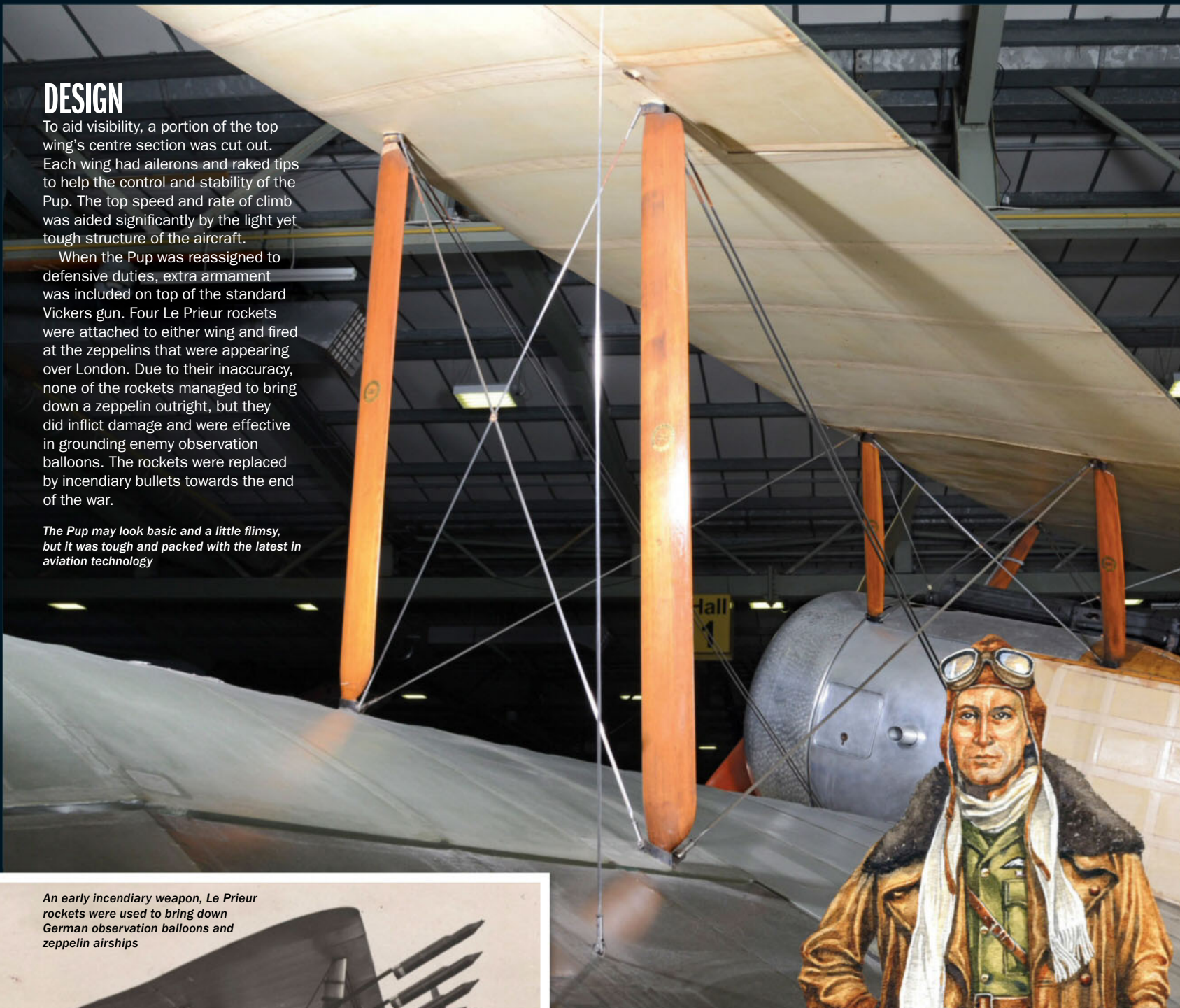


DESIGN

To aid visibility, a portion of the top wing's centre section was cut out. Each wing had ailerons and raked tips to help the control and stability of the Pup. The top speed and rate of climb was aided significantly by the light yet tough structure of the aircraft.

When the Pup was reassigned to defensive duties, extra armament was included on top of the standard Vickers gun. Four Le Prieur rockets were attached to either wing and fired at the zeppelins that were appearing over London. Due to their inaccuracy, none of the rockets managed to bring down a zeppelin outright, but they did inflict damage and were effective in grounding enemy observation balloons. The rockets were replaced by incendiary bullets towards the end of the war.

The Pup may look basic and a little flimsy, but it was tough and packed with the latest in aviation technology



An early incendiary weapon, Le Prieur rockets were used to bring down German observation balloons and zeppelin airships



A SOPWITH PUP PILOT

The uniform of an RFC pilot was based on comfort, protection and warmth. A thick leather overcoat and scarf were worn at all times to protect from the cold as well as chafing from the wind. Goggles and a flying helmet were a necessity in an open cockpit as all sorts of debris could fly into the pilot's face. Tough boots were also a must to withstand the wear and tear of piloting a Pup.

“GOGGLES AND A FLYING HELMET WERE A NECESSITY IN AN OPEN COCKPIT”



“THE TOP SPEED AND RATE OF CLIMB WAS AIDED SIGNIFICANTLY BY THE LIGHT YET TOUGH STRUCTURE OF THE AIRCRAFT”



The Pup's whole engine casing rotated as only the crank remained stationary



Right: A single-seat fighter, the Pup had a wooden frame covered in canvas



THE SOPWITH ZOO

THE DOMINATION OF THE SOPWITH AVIATION COMPANY IN BRITAIN'S WAR IN THE SKIES

Founded by Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith, the aviation company started off small but soon grew into one of the chief designers of World War I aircraft. In just eight years the company employed 3,500 people in 14 acres of factories. 25 per cent of the British aircraft flown in World War I were Sopwith designs with 60 per cent of all single-seat aircraft being made by the company. After the war, Sopwith couldn't capitalise on its monopoly in the industry and failed to adjust to the lack of peacetime demand for fighter planes. By 1920, the company was no more.



Above: An experimental design, the Sopwith Triplane was only built in small numbers but was nevertheless effective against the German Fokkers

Above, right: Equipped with two Vickers .303 machine guns and highly manoeuvrable, the Camel came into its own after coming into combat service in June 1917

Right: The Strutter was a pioneering design and was the first British fighter to include a synchronised machine gun on board



Images: Alamy, Mary Evans



ZEPPELIN

BRITAIN'S ORIGINAL BLITZ

How Germany's marauding airship fleets created the first aerial bombing campaign in history, and pioneered a new way of war

As well as coastal towns, Zeppelins also terrorised major British cities such as Liverpool and London on a regular basis

WARS

WORDS NICK SOLDINGER

19 January 1915, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England. Samuel Smith, a 53-year-old cobbler, is working late. He needs to – he needs the money to provide for his aging mother and the two orphans she’s recently taken into her home. At about 0830 hours, as he’s finishing up his work, he hears a distant throbbing. It grows ever louder, until his workshop is shuddering and its windows are rattling in their frames.

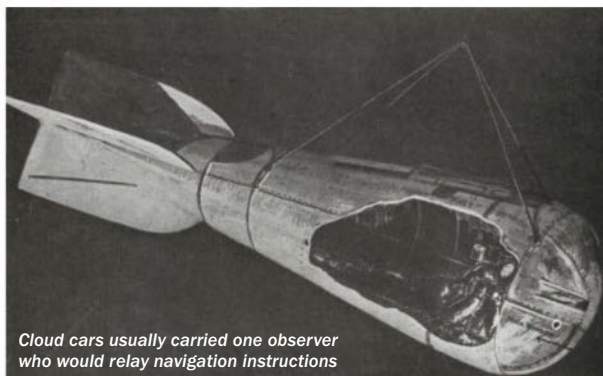
A mystified Smith lays down his hammer, opens his workshop door and steps out into the cold, clear night. He stands on the cobbles and looks up: above him, almost skimming the rooftops, is what must have looked like something conjured up by HG Wells or Jules Verne. A giant silver airship, more than 500

feet long, looms above, lit up by the harsh moonlight. It is so vast, in fact, that it’s longer than the street Smith is standing in. He watches mesmerised as it rumbles overhead right up until the moment the 110-pound bomb it drops spirals its way down to where he is standing. He is killed instantly and, along with his 72-year-old neighbour Martha Taylor, becomes the earliest victim of an air raid over Britain.

Back in Germany, Commander Peter Strasser, of the German Navy’s recently formed Airship Division, is thrilled. His plan to bring an end to the stalemate on the Western Front’s battlefields by bombing Britain’s civilian population into submission has got off to a successful start. War will never be fought the same way again.

INSIDE A WAR ZEPPELIN

THE TERRIFYING WORLD OF THE FLOATING KILLING PLATFORMS, AND THE MEN WHO MANNED THEM MILES ABOVE THE GROUND



Cloud cars usually carried one observer who would relay navigation instructions



Zeppelins could carry multiple machine guns to target threats from the ground

Both the German army and navy operated zeppelin crews during the war. Thanks to the efforts of Peter Strasser, however, its navy really pioneered and pushed the bombing of civilian targets in Britain.

Whichever branch of the services they came from, those who manned the zeppelins were essentially Special Forces. All were highly trained volunteers who conducted high-risk operations deep behind enemy lines, using state-of-the-art technology. Science was initially

on their side, and for a brief moment in 1915-16, during the so-called 'Zeppelin Scourge', the bombing behemoths they flew owned the skies. They were giants who simply couldn't be slain. However, as time went on and the technological balance began to shift, their missions became increasingly perilous.

Even without the emerging dangers of weaponry that could blast them out of the skies, however, the life of a zeppelin crewman was hazardous. Their workplace was a bizarre world of cogs and levers, suspended two miles above the Earth's surface by a battleship-sized balloon filled with highly flammable hydrogen.

While these floating death traps grew increasingly bigger as the war went on, crew sizes remained roughly the same as planners wrestled with equations about weight and altitude. On average, 20 men were required to steer these monstrous killing platforms across the Channel. Their roles included airship commanders, wireless operators, navigators,

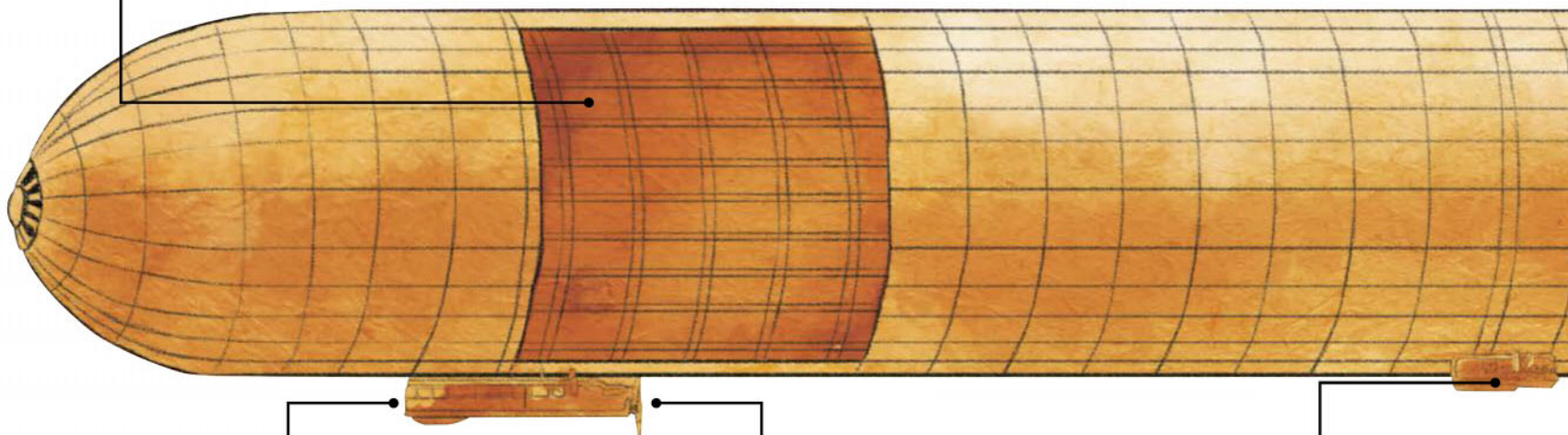
ruddermen and elevatormen who would control direction and height, sail makers to repair tears and bullet holes in the hull, plus assorted mechanics and bombardiers.

All crewmen were also trained to use the on-board defensive machine guns, although these were often left behind or dispensed with once airborne, along with parachutes. Both items were simply considered unnecessary weight in an environment where being able to climb rapidly was your only real hope of surviving combat.

“WHICHEVER BRANCH OF THE SERVICES THEY CAME FROM, THOSE WHO MANNED THE ZEPPELINS WERE ESSENTIALLY SPECIAL FORCES”

GAS BAGS

As opposed to blimps, which are merely pressurised balloons, zeppelins were kept aloft by thousands of bags filled with hydrogen gas. These were made from goldbeater's skin - which is actually the outer membrane of a cow's intestine. Primarily used as sausage skin, so much of it was demanded by the zeppelin factories that sausage production was suspended in parts of Germany during the war.



FORWARD CONTROL CABIN

This was the main flight deck where the airship commander, navigator, ruddermen, elevatormen and wireless operator would have worked. Most of the engineers were stationed in the rear gondola serving the main engines in an environment that was as noisy as it was dangerous.

ENGINES

These were housed on the gondolas. Although they varied in size and weight, a typical engine for later R-class airships was the six-cylinder Maybach HSLU. It produced 240hp and six were used to power the ship - one on the front cabin, two on the side gondolas and three on the rear. They could produce a top speed of 63 miles per hour and could propel the zeppelin to over 13,000 feet.

CLOUD CAR

It may look like a high-risk fairground ride, but this was actually an observation platform. If a zeppelin became temporarily unaware of its position, an observer could be winched down from inside the hull up to half a mile below to spot for landmarks. He could then relate back to the bombardiers above by telephone. To make it safer, a lightning conductor was built into the suspension cable.

THE ZEPPELIN BLITZ

25 YEARS BEFORE NAZI BOMBERS SET LONDON ABLAZE, BRITAIN'S CAPITAL WAS ATTACKED BY AIRSHIP RAIDERS

On the night of 8 September 1915, Zeppelin LZ13 slunk over the Norfolk coast. It then followed rivers and canals south until its commander Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy spotted London's lights sparkling on the horizon. His intended target was in sight.

This wasn't the first time a zeppelin had bombed London. There had been three earlier attacks on the capital, the first in May 1915 and the last just the previous night. In total, 35 civilians had been killed and a further 121 wounded. All of those attacks, however, had been on the city's suburbs east of the Tower of London. Kaiser Wilhelm, the German emperor, had been very specific about where his marauding knights of the sky could attack. After all, he had family in town – George V was his first cousin and the Tower was the British king's most easterly royal property in the city. Tonight, however, would be different. Tonight, Mathy had the kaiser's blessing to torch the heart of the city. London was about to experience its first Blitz.

Mathy released his first bombs from 8,500 feet, hitting Euston station at about 10.40pm. Lit up by searchlights and with shrapnel from London's anti-aircraft batteries exploding all around him, he headed south. Next to be hit were Bloomsbury and Holborn. The city below him was now on fire, and the streets filling up with the wounded and the dead. Passing north of Saint Paul's, Mathy's zeppelin rained down incendiary bombs on textile warehouses as he steered towards Liverpool Street station. Here, he unleashed his deadliest attack, when a single bomb killed nine people on a bus.



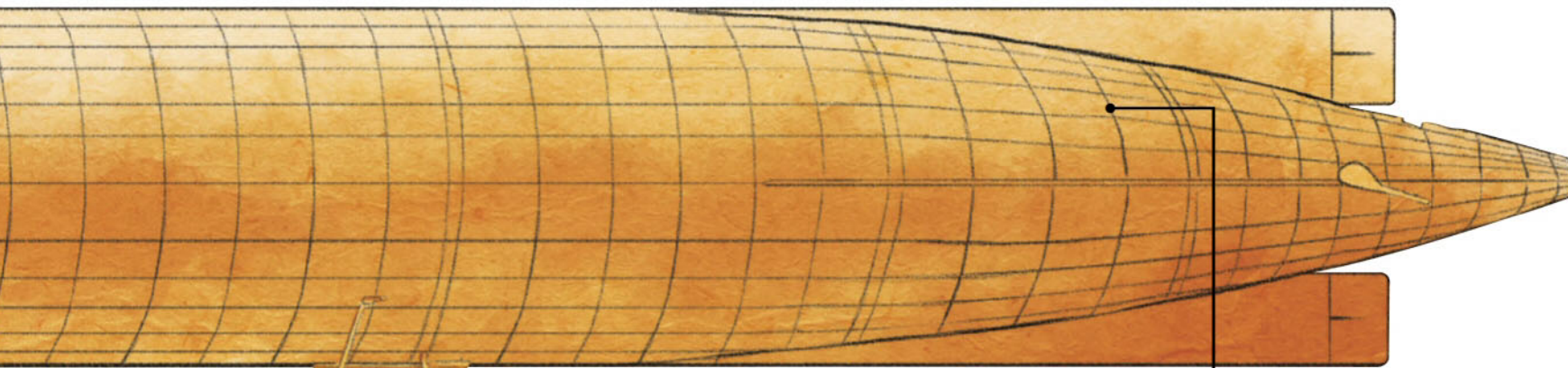
Above: The devastation caused by the zeppelin raid on the night of 8 September 1915 was a foreshadowing of the London Blitz 25 years later

By the time LZ13 crept into clouds and back across the Channel, London – the heart of the British Empire – was ablaze. 55 incendiary bombs had left a river of fire burning in the zeppelin's wake. Mathy had also unleashed 15 high-explosive bombs, including one with a 660-pound payload – far bigger than anything that had previously been dropped on Britain. The night-time raid had caused the modern equivalent of £23 million worth of damage to the city, had injured 87 Londoners and killed 22 more.

It had also proven that London was defenceless against air attack. Just six planes had intercepted the zeppelin, with zero success. The 26 anti-aircraft guns assigned to protect the capital, meanwhile, were too feeble to hit the airship. When some anti-

aircraft fire had come close, Mathy simply took the zeppelin up to 11,200 feet, well out of their range, and carried on bombing from there.

It was shock and awe Edwardian style. As the writer DH Lawrence, who witnessed the raid, wrote in a letter to a friend: "Then we saw the zeppelin above us, amid a gleaming of clouds, high up... and underneath it were splashes of fire as the shells fired from Earth burst. It seemed as if the cosmic order were gone, as if there had come a new order. The Moon is not queen of the sky at night. It seems the zeppelin's taken control."



MACHINE GUNNER


There were usually several fixed points both on top of the zeppelin and beneath it where machine gunners, operating in temperatures as low as -30 degrees Celsius, could defend the airships against attack from fighters. Gunners wore helmets, gloves and cold-weather clothing once airborne, but often no parachutes.

BOMB BAY

Located in the bottom of the hull, this could hold payloads that weighed up to 4,000 pounds. The bombs were usually a mix of larger high-explosives designed to shatter rooftops and smaller incendiary devices that could then be dropped into buildings to set them ablaze, as was the case with the London raid of 8 September 1915.

STRUCTURE

Zeppelins were typically built around a rigid skeleton of strong but lightweight aluminium girders over which a huge skin, made from chemically treated cotton, was then stretched. A main cable ran, attached at various points to the framework, through the entire length of the hull to give the ship longitudinal strength.



The government used
the anger provoked by
the zeppelin raids to
encourage men to sign
up to the armed forces

**IT IS FAR BETTER
TO FACE THE BULLETS
THAN TO BE KILLED
AT HOME BY A BOMB**

**JOIN THE ARMY AT ONCE
& HELP TO STOP AN AIR RAID**

GOD SAVE THE KING



Britain's German population was targeted after the raids. Mobs, like this one in East London, attacked their homes and businesses

TOTAL WAR IN BRITAIN

GERMANY HOPED TO WIN THE WAR BY SMASHING BRITISH SPIRITS AT HOME. THE ZEPPELIN RAIDS, HOWEVER, HAD AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT EFFECT

The British public's response to the zeppelin raids wasn't what Paul Strasser had hoped for. Rather than breaking the nation's will, what began to evolve was a nascent Blitz spirit.

When London was first bombed in May 1915, young children were among those killed. The shock-horror headlines that reported this news the next day accused Germans of being 'baby killers'. Riots erupted, German businesses were attacked, and the thousands of Germans then resident in the UK were interned.

After the more serious bombing of central London in September 1915, however, the nation's anger shifted towards the British government for its failure to provide adequate protection for its citizens. For centuries the Royal Navy had kept the nation safe, but who could counter this new threat from the air? A radical rethink was required.

Britain had no independent air force at the time, so pilots from both the army's Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Navy Air Service were recalled from France to defend the home front. By the end of the war, the Royal Air Force had been established, and the foundations of an aerial defence network laid – one that would, 22 years later, save the nation during the Battle of Britain.

ZEPPELIN RAIDER HEINRICH MATHY

IN ONE OF THE WAR'S DEADLIEST THEATRES, HE PROVED TO BE GERMANY'S MOST DARING WARRIOR

Heinrich Mathy was the most audacious zeppelin raider of the war and a household name in both Germany and Britain. Although he forged his reputation in the skies, he was a sailor by profession – one who had been fast-tracked through the service, taking command of his first ship while still in his Twenties.

While training to become a staff officer at the German Naval Academy in 1913, however, he'd encountered and become infatuated with Count von Zeppelin's new lighter-than-air ships. This brought him to the notice of Peter Strasser, boss of the navy's Airships Division, and by January 1915, Mathy was taking part in his first zeppelin raid against Britain.

Over the next two years, Mathy took part in 14 more raids – more than any other captain – dropping 38 tons of explosives in the process. He's best remembered for his attack on London on 8 September 1915. It was the most devastating raid of the campaign, causing, in monetary terms alone, more than a sixth of all the damage done by zeppelins to British towns.

Cool and daring, Mathy seemed unstoppable, but he was playing a high-risk game, and he knew it. On hearing that the British had managed to down their first zeppelin, he wrote: "It's only a question of time before we join the rest. If anyone

says he's not haunted by visions of burning airships, then he's a braggart."

He joined 'the rest' when his zeppelin was shot down over Hertfordshire in October 1916. He was just 33 years old.

Below: Mathy jumped to his death when his zeppelin caught fire during his final raid. This photo shows the ghoulish mark his body made when it hit the ground



THE END OF THE ZEPPELINS

ONCE THOUGHT UNSTOPPABLE, THE MIGHTY ZEPPELINS' DOMINANCE OF THE SKIES TURNED OUT TO BE SHORT-LIVED. THEIR LEGACY, HOWEVER, IS DAUNTING



Left: Commander Peter Strasser dreamed up the zeppelin bombing campaign. "If what we do is frightful," he once said, "then may frightfulness be Germany's salvation"

On the night of 2 September 1916, almost a year after the Mathy raid, a larger zeppelin appeared over London. The SL11 was part of a fleet of 16 airships that had come to bomb targets all over England in what was to be the largest zeppelin raid of the war.

Within minutes, however, the SL11 had been tagged by searchlights. Thunderous anti-aircraft fire began ripping bright holes in the night all around it, and a British fighter was attacking. The plane was piloted by 21-year-old Lieutenant Leefe Robinson of the Royal Flying Corps. This was only his second time in combat against a zeppelin, but he could see the SL11 clearly above him at 12,000 feet, almost stationary as if lassoed by the searchlight beams.

Robinson had with him a new combination of ammunition in his machine gun's three drums – a mix of incendiary rounds and explosive bullets. Flying directly below the SL11, he strafed it, emptying an entire drum into its belly. When it had no effect, Robinson tried again, roaring beneath its underside once more he unloaded his second drum into the airship's guts. When that didn't work, he decided to try something different.

He lined himself up for a final run and, as he came in, rather than rake the ship's entire hull, he concentrated all of his firepower on one spot near the rear. As he did so, a patch of bright orange appeared in the Zeppelin's skin, and then spread rapidly outwards as the hydrogen beneath it erupted in flames. The watching Londoners

below threw their hats in the air as the titan above them buckled, twisted, and tumbled from the skies.

It was the beginning of the end for the zeppelin as a weapon of war. Super zeppelins were built, which were capable of reaching greater altitudes, but aircraft technology was improving rapidly too. By the end of the war, about 30 zeppelins had been lost on combat operations. The last one to be shot down on 5 August 1918 was the L-70, then the biggest airship in the world. At its helm that night was the zeppelin's greatest champion, the man who was still stubbornly insisting that the airships would bring Germany victory, Paul Strasser. He was killed along with the rest of his crew in what would be the final raid of the war.

Strasser's bombing campaign had killed 557 and injured 1,358, but his belief that he could bring about Britain's surrender by terrorising its citizens had been wrong. In attempting to do so, however, he bequeathed the world the idea that the strategic aerial bombing of civilians was justified. As he himself put it: "We who strike the enemy where his heart beats have been slandered as 'baby killers'... Nowadays there's no such animal as a non-combatant. Modern warfare is total warfare." In this, Strasser was to be proved right, and his appalling prophecy would reach its apogee 30 years later at Dresden and Hiroshima.

Below: A vintage postcard shows the remains of the SL11 downed by Leefe Robinson (inset). The young flyer received the VC for his actions but didn't survive the war



Images: Alamy, Mary Evans, Rebekka Hearl, Getty



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BOOK REVIEWS

History of War's pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

MORLAND – GREAT WAR CORPS COMMANDER: WAR DIARIES & LETTERS, 1914-1918

Edited by: Bill Thompson **Publisher:** Matador Books **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

THE WAR DIARIES AND LETTERS OF A BRITISH WESTERN FRONT GENERAL HAVE THE DUST AND DRIED BLOOD BLOWN OFF OF THEM

This unsettling book documents the war on the Western Front between 1914-18 through the diaries and letters of one of the men who helped direct the slaughter, Sir Thomas Morland. It's also a disturbing insight into the mind-set of a World War I military commander.

General Sir Thomas Morland KCB, KCMG, DSO – to give him his full ribbons-and-medals moniker – commanded X Corps and then XIII Corps during the conflict. As such, he was responsible for sending thousands of men to their deaths at the Somme, and again at Passchendaele while he sat in his HQ close enough to the front to hear the guns, but too far back to catch the screaming.

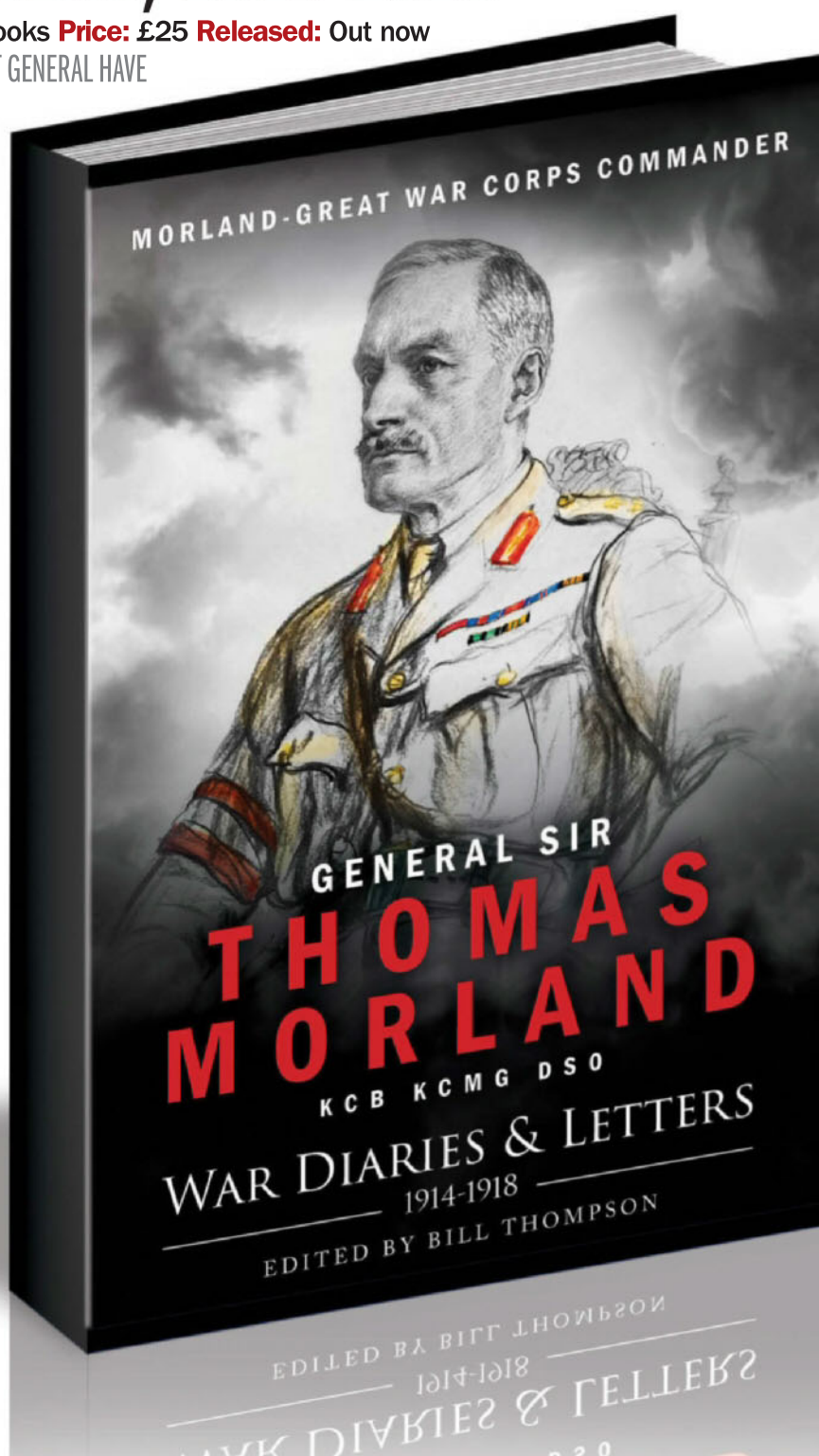
This book takes us, one day at a time, through the carnage he helped preside over, starting in October 1914, when he first leaves for France, right through to the armistice four years later. In between we get curt accounts of each day's events, which are superficially mundane, yet bloated with poignancy.

Morland's eight-line entry for 1 July 1916, for example, begins: "Attack starts at 7.30am," before going on to say "32nd doesn't get on so well." The attack he's talking about is the first day of the Somme, while the '32nd' is the 32nd division – the New Army of bakers, clerks, and carpenters who'd answered Kitchener's call. Of the 12,000 of these citizen soldiers who went over the top that day, 3,942 were killed or wounded. Morland's indifference to their fate is chilling. It's also typical. The death of his younger brother earlier in the book is simply noted as: "Hear at lunchtime that Charlie was killed on 31st."

The conduct of Britain's military commanders during World War I was questioned almost as soon as the conflict ended. Embittered veteran Basil Liddell Hart led the charge labelling it as "not merely immoral but criminal," and for many the phrase "lions led by donkeys" came to symbolise the nature of Britain's sacrifice.

In recent years, however, several major historians have repudiated this idea. Making the case that, despite early setbacks, the likes of Morland did learn from their mistakes, that their troops did have faith in them, and that winning the war was proof of all that.

Yet to achieve their victory, men like Morland squandered the lives of more than 722,000 men under their command, and this book, the first ever to reveal the daily inner thoughts of a senior British officer from that conflict, suggests that they did so with a carelessness bordering on the psychopathic. Liddell Hart, it seems, was right all along.



POTSDAM: THE END OF WORLD WAR II AND THE REMAKING OF EUROPE

Writer: Michael Neiberg **Publisher:** Basic Books **Price:** £19.99 **Released:** Out now

THE POWWOW THAT REDREW EUROPE'S MAP AND FINALLY BROUGHT AN END TO CONTINENTAL CONFLICT THERE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The Potsdam Conference is an oddly overlooked yet hugely important moment in history. Held between 17 July and 2 August 1945 amid the smoking rubble and refugee queues of Eastern Germany, it brought together the leaders of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union.

The last time the leaders of those countries had met had been in February 1945 at Yalta. Nazi Germany was then just weeks from collapse and on the agenda was how to reorganise a post-Hitler Europe. With the tyrant now toppled, Potsdam was intended to work out the practicalities of that.

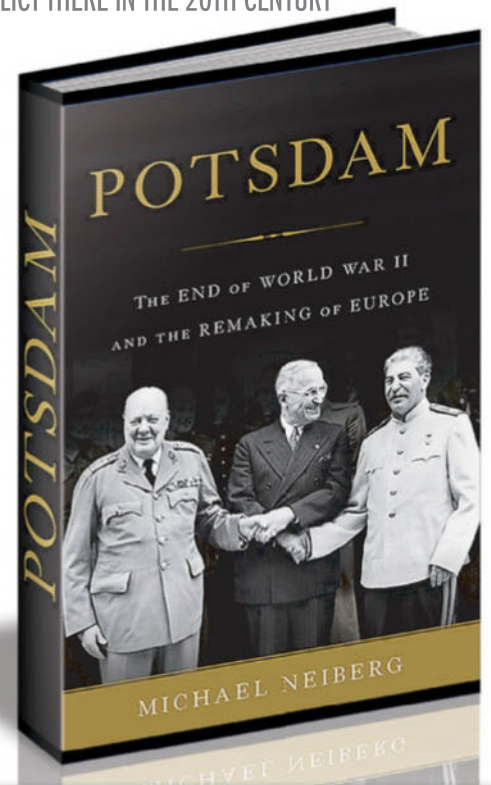
As was befitting of an impending new world order, the line-up of major players was shifting, too. At Yalta, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill had broken bread. But by the time Potsdam started, Harry S Truman had replaced the recently deceased Roosevelt, and by the time it was over, the British electorate had swapped Churchill for Clement Attlee. Only Stalin survived, and Stalin, as Neiberg puts it, was determined that Russia's "voice would dominate."

The Soviets' leader, however, wasn't to have it all his own way. News that the US had successfully tested its first atom bomb early on

in the conference buoyed a privately insecure Truman, while Attlee turned out to be a much steelier negotiator than expected. Not that the conference was any kind of standoff. This wasn't, as Neiberg compellingly argues, the start of the Cold War, as many have claimed. On the contrary, those who sat down at Potsdam came together as victorious allies to try to work out what shape the peace was going to take, and left it feeling confident there wouldn't be another European war.

Neiberg's book explores all of this deftly, arguing that historical precedent was a major force in the decision-making process. Not least the Versailles Treaty of 1919 that had led to Hitler's rise, and that hung over negotiations like a ghastly spectre.

Bizarrely, however, the book completely swerves the conference's most notorious action point. Article XIII, sanctioned by all the Allies, resulted in 'die Vertreibung', the forcible expulsion of 12 million ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe. An act of pure vengeance that led, according to some estimates, to more than 2 million deaths by the early 1950s. A curious thing to omit from an otherwise comprehensive look at one of history's true crossroads.

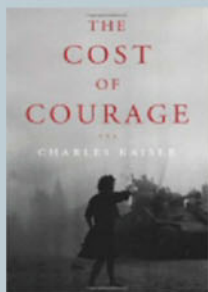


From left, Winston Churchill, Harry S Truman and Joseph Stalin meet before the Potsdam Conference

ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING

THE COST OF COURAGE

A book that everyone should read, Charles Kaiser tells the story of the Bouloche siblings, an affluent trio who played a critical role in the French Resistance, to their great cost.



ACROSS THE POND

This selection of diary entries written by an outsider unfamiliar with the customs of the British provides a clever, and quite simply hysterical, account of Victorian London.



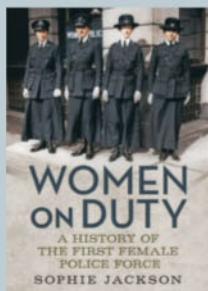
LIFE AS A BATTLE OF BRITAIN SPITFIRE PILOT

An emotional journey from start to finish, this collection of memoirs from American Pilot Arthur 'Art' Donahue thrusts the reader straight into the cockpit.



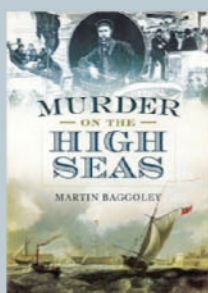
WOMEN ON DUTY

An enthralling insight into a fairly neglected area of feminist history, this is an absorbing breakdown of the events leading up to the creation of the first British female police force.



MURDER ON THE HIGH SEAS

From mutinies to a captain with a grudge, Martin Baggoley explores the events surrounding 14 murders that took place on British vessels, and what happened next.



THE GURKHAS: 200 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CROWN

Writer: Major General J C Lawrence CBE **Publisher:** Uniform Press

Price: £40 **Released:** Out now

“IF A MAN SAYS HE IS NOT AFRAID OF DYING, HE IS EITHER LYING OR IS A GURKHA”

From the early 19th century right through to the modern day, the Gurkhas have been a vital part of the British Army. *The Gurkhas: 200 Years Of Service To The Crown* sums up the full history of the regiment, resulting in a comprehensive and engaging read. The book pulls no punches, launching itself straight into a superbly detailed account of 200 years of the Gurkhas. The author himself boasts first-hand experience with the regiments, joining up with the First Battalion of the 2nd King Edward VII's own Gurkha rifles in August 1984, no doubt adding to the immense detail on offer on each and every page.

The chronology spans a wide time frame, beginning with the first British meetings with the Gurkhas through to their continued assistance to the British Army in Afghanistan. The imagery is excellent throughout and particularly striking when battle paintings from the Anglo-

Sikh War are put alongside action shots of the modern generation of Gurkhas. Our favourite picture is from World War II, where American GIs are clearly deeply fascinated by the kukri. The year-by-year layout never gets tiresome and this is in part due the chronology being divided up by a series of asides that are based on the history of the iconic kukri knife, the Gurkha relationship with the Highland Regiments and even their apparent proficiency at hill racing. This helps maintain the book's excellent habit of being easy as well as providing detail that you might not get elsewhere. Approximately 100,000 Gurkhas fought in World War I and 138,000 in World War II. The British Army owes a lot to this elite force and this book is a perfect representation of their sacrifices for king and country.

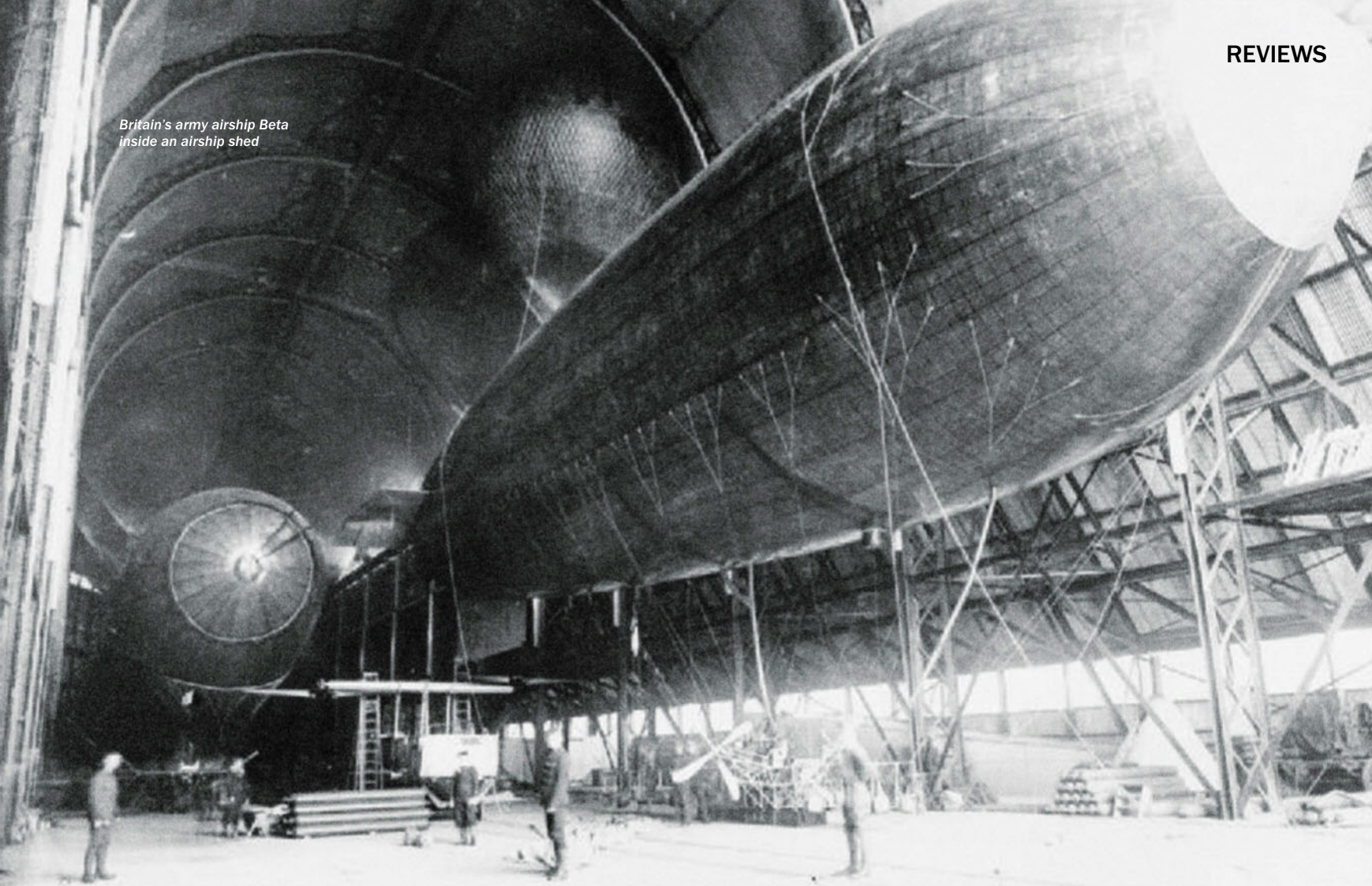


Above: A Gurkha soldiers waits in position during the Burma campaign

“The book pulls no punches, launching itself straight into a superbly detailed account of 200 years of the Gurkhas”



Britain's army airship Beta
inside an airship shed



BRITISH AIRSHIP BASES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Writer: Malcolm Fife **Publisher:** Fonthill Media **Price:** £30 **Released:** Out now

A STORY OF SUPER-SIZED FLYING MACHINES, HIGH-TECH BASES AND THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL AIRBORNE NETWORK

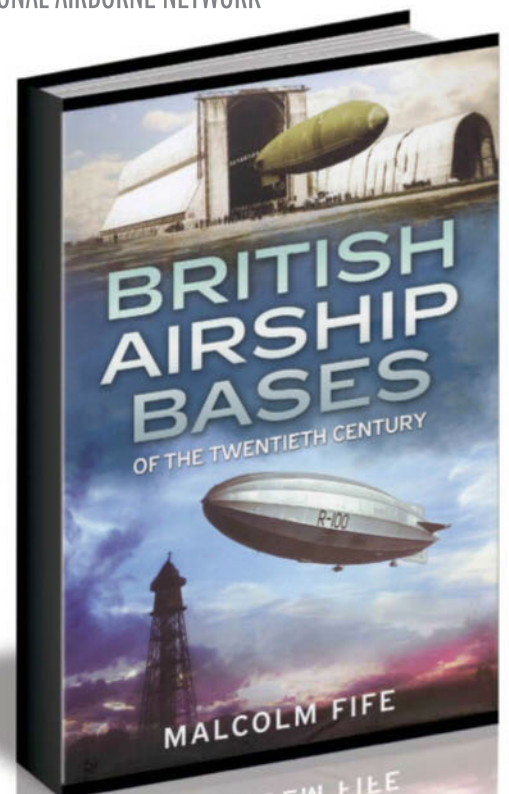
For a few brief decades as the 19th century morphed into the 20th, airships looked like the future. Giant flying wonders that it was believed could reach around the globe. While they were without doubt the grandfathers of long-haul flight, developments in aircraft design soon outpaced them, leaving ideas about their commercial and military use very much in the folder marked 'experimental'.

Back in 1914, however, when Europe was plunged into World War I, both sides were keen to use these floating behemoths to their military advantage. For the Germans, that meant using their highly advanced zeppelins to conduct the first aerial bombing campaigns against civilian targets, hitting towns and cities across England. For the British, it meant the short-lived Royal Naval Air Service using them to patrol Britain's coasts, hunting for battleships and U-Boats.

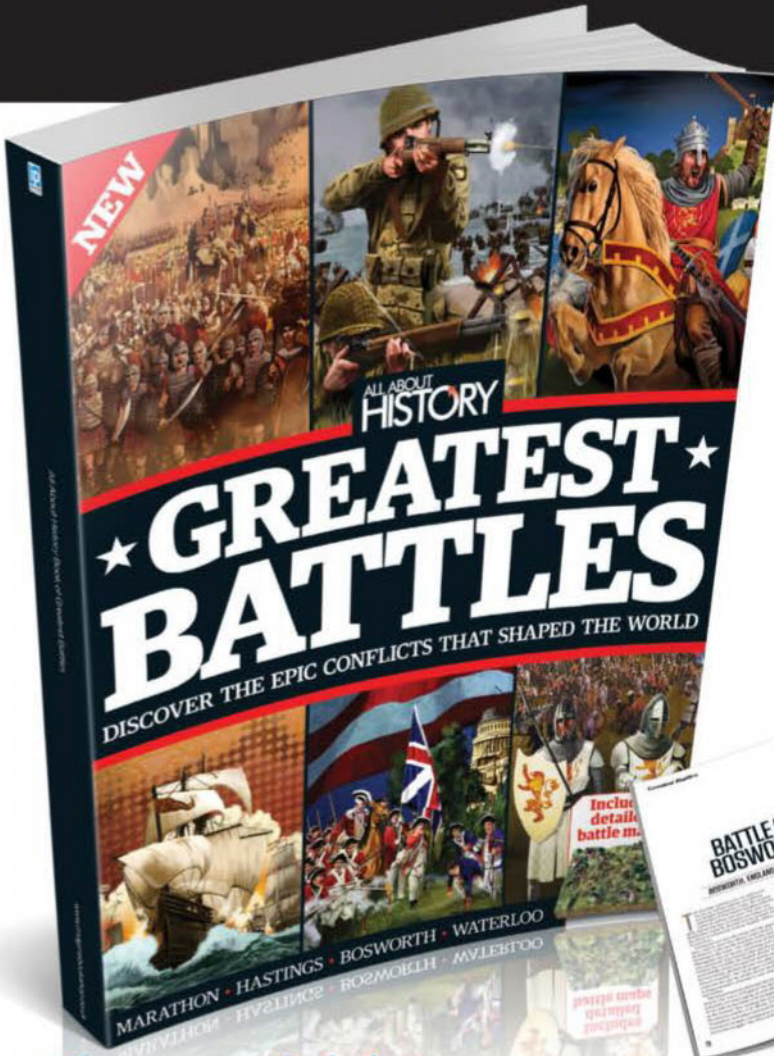
Britain built well over 200 of these magnificent flying machines during and after the war, complete with an international infrastructure to support their roll-out. All of this required significant effort and resources, with huge aerodromes replete with giant steel docking masts, gargantuan hangers plus whole armies of support workers to keep the vessels (air)ship-shape.

This is the long-lost world that Malcolm Fife's anoraky but intriguing book invites us into, before taking us on a fascinating journey from Cromer to Karachi. Along the way we learn that these bases often had to be built in remote areas to minimise the risk of crashing into buildings – a factor that in itself often presented massive engineering headaches. We also learn that the huge volumes of highly explosive hydrogen required by the ships meant that specialist works had to be created and maintained, often at enormous risk. We also learn that a truly global British airship network very nearly happened, with plans to extend it from Britain, Canada, Egypt, and India – where bases were built – to Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia and Africa, where further ones were planned.

In the end, though, as this absorbing book points out, it was a flight bound for one of Britain's imperial outposts that brought that particular ambition to an end. The airship R101 left Bedfordshire bound for present-day Pakistan on 4 October 1930 but crashed in France the following day, killing 48 of the 54 people on board. At the time it was Britain's greatest ever air disaster, and by the start of the World War II, the faith in airships as either a weapon of war or a tool of empire had all but evaporated.



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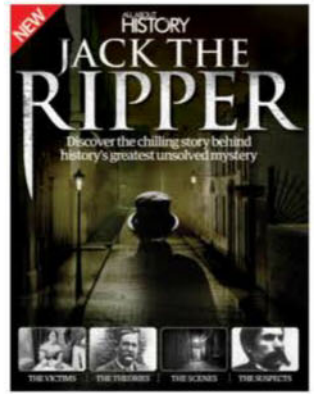
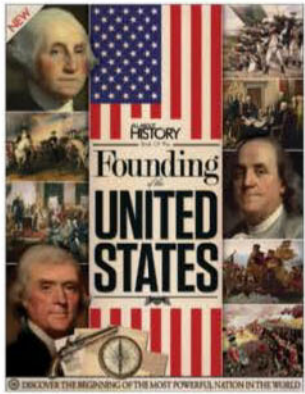
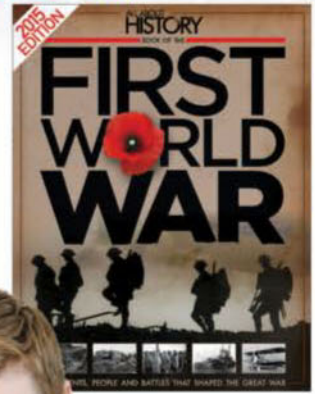


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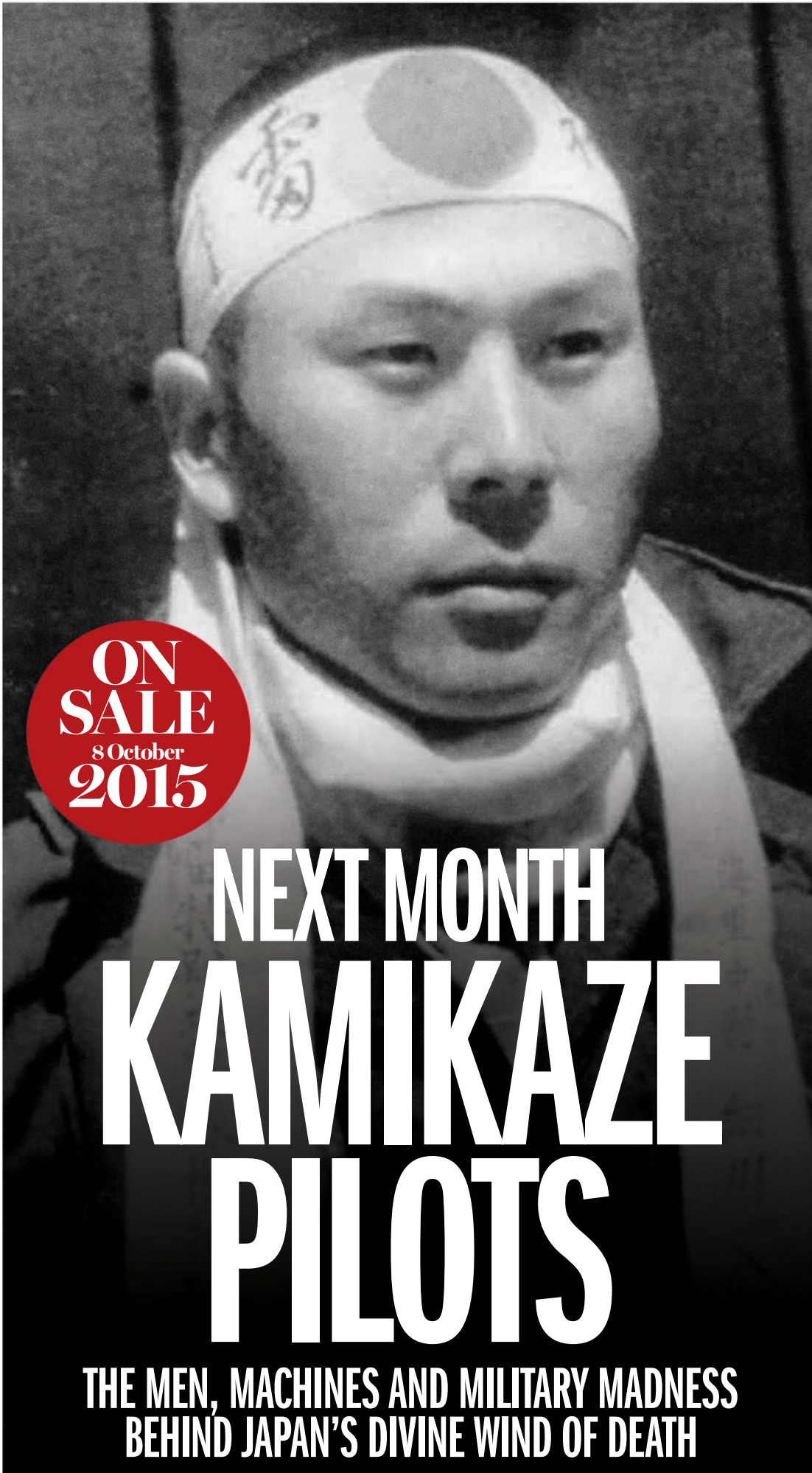
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SUTTON HOO HELMET

A rare and potentially royal helmet that has become an icon of the early Medieval era

Found shortly before World War II, the hoard at Sutton Hoo is a glimpse into Britain's Anglo-Saxon past. Located in a grassy mound in Suffolk, England, archaeologists were shocked to unearth what is believed to be the tomb of a 7th-century East Anglian nobleman in the shape of a 24-metre-long wooden ship.

The wood had rotted away, but 1,300-year-old treasures remained, including clothing fasteners, Frankish coins, musical instruments and drinking horns. The most remarkable find, however, was an iron warrior helmet. Extremely rare, it is only one of four helmets that have ever been excavated in Britain. The helm was decorated in bronze and tin and would have been crafted by the most skilled metalworkers in post-Roman Britain. The item is particularly impressive as it resembles a Roman cavalry helmet with additional protection for the eyes, eyebrows and nose that are tailored specifically to the owner. It may have been used as a symbol for a leader to galvanise his followers into war and conquest. The design also illustrates Saxon culture and mythology, with the impression of a boar's head above each eyebrow, a dragonhead in between them and panels that depict battle scenes.

The hoard's past is unknown, but experts have reasoned that it may have Swedish heritage, as ship burials were common in Norse society. As well as the helmet, the tomb also contained other weaponry, suggesting that the grave was for a warrior chieftain of some sort.

Both the original and replica, along with other Anglo-Saxon treasures, can be seen at the British Museum. For more information visit www.britishmuseum.org.



Above: The owner of the Sutton Hoo hoard remains a mystery, but judging by the sheer number of finds, he was undoubtedly a man of great importance



“EXTREMELY RARE, IT IS ONLY ONE OF FOUR HELMETS THAT HAVE EVER BEEN EXCAVATED IN BRITAIN”

Left: The original helmet was badly damaged when it was found, but it has been rebuilt and also faithfully re-created in a series of replicas

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The Desert Rats' Cromwell

A vehicle made famous by the British 7th Armoured Division, who had been dubbed the Desert Rats for their exploits in North Africa. However, the 7th Armoured were not issued with Cromwells until 1944, when they returned to the U.K. to prepare for D-Day. They fought in their Cromwells across France and into Germany, and eventually took part in the Victory Parade on September 7, 1945, in Berlin.

Development for the Cromwell first began in 1940 when the General Staff knew the Crusader would soon become obsolete. The tank was the fastest British tank to serve in the war, with a top speed of 40 mph (64 km/h). Its dual purpose 75 mm main gun had HE and armour-piercing capabilities and its armour ranged from 8 mm up to 76 mm overall.

In World of Tanks, you can command the Cromwell from the driver's seat. World of Tanks is an online PC game dedicated to tank warfare in the mid-20th century, with over 300 of history's most iconic tanks.

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